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The leap of faith: An examination of the philosophic unity of Alfred, Lord Tennyson's "In Memoriam"

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THE LEAP OF FAITH: AN EXAMINATION OF THE PHILOSOPHIC UNITY OF ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON'S IN MEMORIAM

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by

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout history men have been caught between two modes of existence. One of these modes represents a state of constant despair and destruction; the other represents a way to faith and salvation. The conflict and tension between the two states have placed many men in the position of being constantly stricken by doubt and anxiety. Men in every period of history have experienced this struggle, but perhaps those most severely torn by it were those of the nineteenth century in Europe.

Any widely felt moral, social, or philosophical conflict will eventually be reflected by the literature of the age in which the conflict is produced.

But what of the role of literature in this struggle? How does the literary and poetic imagination play a part in the resolution of these conflicts? Literature is a highly individualized activity--the writer of a poem is at once set off from the masses and becomes more intensely himself. A poem presupposes a single person--a <u>vox clamantis in deserto</u>. The individual through the poem makes an outpouring of his feelings which will eventually be heard by the reader of the poem. But the mind which produces the poem is essentially in a chaotic condition because of its awareness of the chaotic condition of life around it. Through the act of the poetic experience--by producing a piece of poetry--the chaotic conditions of the mind and universe become ordered. The poetic production seen in

this light, then, is sometimes a self-purgation for the poet. In this instance, precisely, it becomes a re-enactment on the poet's part of Sisyphus' labor. The poet struggles within himself to produce a poem. At its completion, the struggle is momentarily resolved; but at the first subsequent doubt, at the first subsequent conflict, the stuff of which poetry is made once again presents itself and the cycle begins anew.

Alfred Tennyson was no exception to this poetic process. He, like many poets, struggled to produce poetry; further, he seemed to have a temperamental shell of despair and isolation that led him to realize a shock at his sudden awareness of man and himself as insignificant in the total scheme of things. In spite of this feature of his personality, he was able to attain a certain compromise tranquility after a period marked by a severe conflict between doubt and belief. He seemed to feel that doubt, its resultant suffering, and other typically human experiences were the means by which individual souls could eventually be developed. More specifically, they were the means by which his own soul could eventually be developed. By doubting and suffering, the soul progresses through a series of spiritual experiences to achieve the full realization of its powers and capabilities. Tennyson arrived at his will to believe by eventually realizing his state of existence and by becoming aware of his place in the universe.

Further, Tennyson was also aware that he could not alter his position in any way. As all men are impotent in this respect, so was Tennyson. There are two streams of thought in In Memoriam that relate to the basic conflict between doubt and resolution: (1) Tennyson's optimism and his will to believe and (2) his doubt and his awareness of death and of the difference between life and death. Although, on a first reading of the poem, these two streams of thought appear to be parallel, it is my contention that the poet's doubt and despair are the more predominant until his faith finally asserts itself at the end of the poem.

Without God, man has a concept of "sin"; in a meaningless universe he demands a meaning; his finite mind insists upon pursuing projects whose scopes are infinite. These ideas give contingency and believability to man's being because man will thus concern himself with his own problems and the problems of mankind.

There is a basic humanitarian element in In Memoriam that seems to conflict with Tennyson's love of the past and his dread of sudden and violent changes. But this humanitarianism notwithstanding, it is precisely the dread of sudden and violent changes that appears to be a primary initiator of In Memoriam. In other words, Tennyson equates the end of life and the sudden onset of death as a sudden and violent change. It was probably this feeling he had

that led him to comment on the religious disputes of the times.[1]

These characteristics of Tennyson are also features of the philosophy of Christian existentialism, which was being formulated in Denmark by Søren Kierkegaard while Tennyson was writing In Memoriam. Indeed, both the philosophy of Kierkegaard and the poetry of Tennyson were responses to severe social and personal spiritual problems. As both men lived in an age when religious observance was often little more than lip service and hypocrisy, it seems natural that they should reflect similar thoughts. It seems natural for them to reflect similar thoughts also because of their similar personal problems. For Tennyson, In Memoriam was the summit of the hill up which the poet, like Sisyphus, pushed his stone. Tennyson's stone was his doubt, agony, and conflict; the summit of the hill was his state of resolution, acceptance, and calmness; the last push to the summit was the affirmation of faith.

These remarks are not intended to imply that Tennyson was a "Christian existentialist." To so label him would be erroneous. But in the study of In Memoriam there are found to be apposite thoughts in the works of Kierkegaard.

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[1]Hoxie Neale Fairchild, Religious Trends in English Poetry, Vol. IV, "1830-1880: Christianity and Romanticism in the Victorian Era" (New York, 1957), p. 107.

Previous studies have hinted at, and have briefly pointed to, certain similarities between Kierkegaard's existentialism and Tennyson's In Memoriam.

Jerome H. Buckley, for example, turns to Kierkegaard's Concluding Unscientific Postscript, where the philosopher says:

> I contemplate the order of nature in the hope of finding God, and I see omnipotence and wisdom; but I also see much else that disturbs my mind and excites anxiety. The sum of all this is an objective uncertainty. But it is for this very reason that the inwardness becomes as intense as it is, for it embraces this objective uncertainty with the entire passion for the infinite.[2]

Buckley feels that Tennyson's faith which lives in "honest doubt" is similar to Kierkegaard's idea that an objective uncertainty examined through inwardness is the highest truth an existing individual is capable of attaining.[3] Tennyson, says Buckley, is the "subjective thinker" according to Kierkegaard's definition; Tennyson is one "who 'seeks to understand the abstract determination of being human in terms of this particular existing human being.'"[4]

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[2]Søren Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript to the Philosophical Fragments, trans. David F. Swenson and Walter Lowrie (Princeton, 1941), p. 182; hereafter cited as Postscript. Quoted by Buckley, Tennyson: The Growth of a Poet (Cambridge, Mass., 1960; reprinted New York, 1965), p. 125.

[3]Tennyson, p. 125.

[4]Postscript, p. 315. Quoted by Buckley, p. 126.

Basil Willey, in an earlier study, likewise hints at a spiritual progression and a note of existentialism in In Memoriam. He refers to Tennyson's mention of "more faith in honest doubt" and says that "the object of Faith is a Power that dwells in darkness and cloud as well as in light, and a man who has never doubted cannot possess that tensest kind of faith which consists, not in doubt's non-existence, nor even in its annihilation, but in believing in despite of it, and dwelling in 'tracts of calm from tempest made.'"[5] Willey believes that to a person such as Tennyson, a person "so awake to spiritual reality, . . .a believing attitude was inevitable and necessary."[6] And Tennyson, even though he needed religious assurance, would not accept any assurance unless it were agreeable to recently uncovered "truths." According to Willey, "It was thus that he came to base his faith on what seemed the only invulnerable foundation: the needs and affirmations of the heart."[7]

Tennyson was not a fervently religious man. Rather, he was one who could find more peace of mind and inner contentment by a simple faith and by believing where he could not actually prove. However, this is an oversimplification of the matter, for Tennyson was beset by many

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[5]More Nineteenth Century Studies (New York and London, 1956), p. 98.

[6]Ibid., p. 99.

[7]Ibid., p. 99.

spiritual problems, as I shall point out later. Even though Tennyson employs Christ-like images in In Memoriam, the poem is seldom specifically Christian. As Buckley and Willey agree, In Memoriam goes beyond any formal dogma and tries to "discover the availability of any religious faith at all and finally to establish subjective experience as sufficient ground for a full assent to the reality of God and the value of the human enterprise."[8] The poem is not an apologia for Christian doctrine; "It goes behind Christianity, or passes it by, confronting the preliminary question which besets the natural man, the question whether there can be any religious interpretation of life at all."[9]

I have mentioned the analogue of Sisyphus and have pointed to two recent and major studies which briefly touch upon the presence of an existential spiritual progression in In Memoriam. Indeed, the idea of a poetic spiritual progression is common. But I maintain that on the grounds of a number of pieces of internal evidence that Tennyson's journey is not a simple and smooth one. It is marked by periods of severe stress and doubt. Through a long period of turmoil, Tennyson finds that he can resolve his religious dilemma not by ritual and prayer services, but by believing in a "beam in darkness" (Prologue, 24), by keeping a

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[8] Tennyson, p. 127.

[9] More Nineteenth Century Studies, p. 81.

self-realization that knowledge should "grow from more to more to more" (Prologue, 25), and that reverence should "more within us dwell" (Prologue, 26). By the end of his journey, he finds that he achieves a regenerated faith--faith in immortality and faith in God.

At the beginning of a discussion of the philosophical thought of a poet one is faced with an immediate problem: the question of what existence is. What can the answer really be except that it is? Existentialism does not attempt to offer concrete solutions for problems of this nature; it attempts, rather to define the problem, to focus it, and to make it known. Kierkegaard's form of existentialism does not ask, "Why am I here?" but asks, "What can I do while I am here?" Tennyson echoes the same thought when he asks in the third section of In Memoriam if he should take a thing so blind as Nature, "a hollow form with empty hands," and embrace it as his own (9-12).

Before the thought of the poem can be studied, there needs to be a look at Tennyson's life and times, for they were the factors which so deeply affected him. They were the factors that helped to create Tennyson's concern for existence and immortality. On these terms, Tennyson's poem can be studied from both a biographical and philosophical viewpoint.

CHAPTER I: HISTORICAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF ENGLAND AND TENNYSON

ENGLAND IN THE MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY

England, in the early nineteenth century was not only geographically the most fortunate country in the world, but it was also blessed with economic, political, and social eminence. As one critic of the age has commented, "The country was. . .a going concern, as it never was before and has not been since."[1] Indeed, everything was expanding: freedom, education, dominion, and society. Everything led ostensibly to optimism--an optimism that was in turn, transformed into a kind of hopeful religion. But beneath this hyper-optimism there was boiling a ferment which was shortly to manifest itself in all walks of life and on all levels of national operation.

Around 1800, England was divided between the rich citizens and the poor citizens. There came to be an astonishingly small amount of mobility between these two basic classes; each was in its own track and each preferred to stay there. As a result of the optimism and all else but the lack of social mobility, there arose an overwhelming sense of complacency within certain class structures which was eventually to work its destructive force on all aspects of English life--from its religion to its literature. This complacency was bound to produce violent protest. The age

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[1]William R. Inge, The Victorian Age (Cambridge, 1922), p. 17.

in which these phenomena occurred has come to be known as the Victorian Period.

The "Victorian Period" is a very static term to apply to such a dynamic society as England had then.[2] No period of history begins or ends at any particular date. Likewise, what we call the Victorian Age did not commence, fully blown, with the accession of Victoria to the throne in 1837, nor did it end with her death in 1901. There had been a long series of advances in many fields prior to 1837. The age itself was actually the culmination of these advances. The period between the French Revolution and Victoria's crowning--what Toynbee called the Industrial Revolution--was one of more rapid advance than any other in history, outside of our own in the mid-twentieth century. From the Revolution to the accession there occurred an opportunity for men to have an entirely new control over the Forces of nature, the laws of nature, and the applications of nature. This newly-acquired knowledge very soon revolutionized the natural sciences, religion, philosophy, and literature. One of the great interests of the Victorian Age lies in the fact that it was a time when a new social order was being founded and new problems in all fields were being solved. But a still greater interest lies in the fact that as problems were being solved, newer, deeper,

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[2]Charles Petrie, The Victorians (London, 1960), p. 13.

and more profound problems were being created. The polarization of the Victorian Age extended indeed into all realms of life, and, of course, into the minds of individuals.

Matthew Arnold in 1869 made a statement in his "Hebraism and Hellenism" that can be applied in retrospect to the middle years of the century: "Everywhere we see the beginnings of confusion, and we want a clue to some social order and authority."[3] Or, perhaps, Arnold was simply a bit late in spotting the "beginnings of confusion," which were actually beginning many years before his time. Victorian England was subject to the effects of the population increase, the Industrial Revolution, and the turbulent political system of the time. These things combined led to a revival of religion--a religion which eventually pervaded the country's education and society. It was the extent of this concern with religion and religious worship which came to plague the artists, novelists, essayists, and poets of the age. It was this sweeping concern with religion and religious form that planted the first seeds of doubt and anxiety in the creative imaginations of the period, for religion, as was the case with most everything else, was riddled with materialistic theories.

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[3] Poetry and Criticism of Matthew Arnold, ed. A. Dwight Culler (Boston, 1961), p. 475.

One of the direct results of this materialism was Utilitarianism, or the philosophy of individual initiative and religious sensationalism. Benthamism, as it was also called, had a critical, unemotional, and unimaginative outlook on life and religious matters; for the most part, Benthamism rejected religion. Oddly enough, however, a result of Utilitarianism was the religious movement of Evangelicalism. But whereas the Utilitarians viewed the individual as an atom in society, the Evangelicals viewed him as an atom in religion; Evangelicalism concerned itself with the salvation of the individual soul; it represented an atomistic view of worship. Evangelicalism had a moral temper which was strange and more enduring than the actual direct influence of its theology.[4] Even as early as 1830, its aura had begun to fade, but with its fading there was left a powerful agent of reflection in the minds of men--a reflection which led so many of the writers of the period to doubt and question. The Evangelical influence seemed to have had a tendency to sanctify all which came under its power. By sanctifying what was not actually sacred, it gradually moved away from the ultimate purpose of religion: to stimulate a vital relationship of man and world to deity. Evangelicalism seemed to be more concerned with the unreflective level of form and function than with the reflective level of doctrine.

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[4]Fairchild, Religious Trends, IV.18.

Probably the most noticeable feature of the English church in the mid-nineteenth century was its wide diversity of and comprehensiveness of belief; it was as wide and as far-spread as society itself. The Church was influenced by the Evangelical movement and, as a result, began to place its heaviest emphasis on the importance of moral conduct as the framework of a "good" Christian. Its foundation was the Bible and its chief preaching was that of self-improvement; it placed a great deal of importance on the worth of the individual. Theoretically its emphasis was not on form and ritual, but on prayer and preaching. These two aspects became reversed in order of importance, and, by Tennyson's lifetime, form and ritual had become predominant and a materialistic approach to religious matters had come to the foreground.

In the 1830's there began a split in the religious fervor of the age. This schism was mainly a result of the advent of the Oxford Movement, begun in 1833 by John Henry Newman and several other leading Churchmen. Their "Association of Friends of the Church" and their Tracts for the Times strove to revive the doctrine of apostolic succession as the basis of the Church's authority--a belief that was later to have grave repercussions within the

Church.[5] This "Anglo-Catholic Revival" began as an alternative to and an attack upon liberal tendencies within the Church, which had become lax in its support of ancient doctrinal matters, discipline, ritual, and other religious things. The reformers wanted primarily to restore to the Church the worship, dignity, and zeal of earlier times. The ultimate outcome was an internal liturgical conflict between religious circles and an arousal of more intense public interest in ecclesiastical matters.

Precisely how far the entire population was affected by the religious discords is hard to say. But one thing seems to be certain: the literature of the age probably reflected its social, emotional, and personal aspects more than the literature of any other period. Carlyle and Ruskin wore the mantel of prophet and denounced their generation as entirely lackluster and submissive to evil. Arnold was a critic more than he was a prophet, but he, also, surveyed with dismay and retrospect the scene of the Victorian wasteland. These men were certainly leaders of the opposition against the complacency of their contemporaries and of their times. But it is more difficult to assess the position of the Poet Laureate. Tennyson saw that the

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[5]For extensive discussions of the Oxford Movement see R. W. Church, The Oxford Movement (London, 1909); F. Warre Cornish, The English Church in the Nineteenth Century (London, 1933); and L. E. Elliot-Binns, Religions of the Victorian Era (London, 1936).

Victorian social and religious order was crumbling, and what he saw affected him deeply--perhaps more deeply than any other poet of the age. With a great deal of wisdom he told of the problems of the age--problems both personal and public. And through the greatest product of Tennyson comes an expression of the desire to have "more faith in honest doubts. . .than in half the creeds." (XCVI, 11-12) In Memoriam is the turning point in Tennyson's poetical career and is perhaps one of the best poetic documents of the Victorian religious and social problems.

Tennyson lived, then, in an age characterized by the atomistic thought of man alone in the universe. In consequence, his early life was distinctly marked as a quest in which he strove to find answers to the questions of the deeper problems of the human mind. The problems which the poet confronted were many. His own immediate problem was to find a sort of middle ground for his own beliefs. The death of Hallam and the mechanistic attitudes of the times led the poet to despair and bewilderment--both of which came to be resolved in In Memoriam.

THE LIFE OF ALFRED TENNYSON

Alfred Tennyson was born in 1809, the fourth son of the Reverend George Clayton Tennyson and his wife, Elizabeth. Alfred was descended from a family that had been settled

for several centuries in the north-east of England in the vicinity of Lincolnshire. The elder Tennyson was Rector of Somersby and of other small parishes while Elizabeth was set firmly in the role of devoted housewife and mother to her seven children.

George Tennyson was of the type who laid down strict rules and gave lessons with the strictness of a stern task-master. But Alfred and his brothers never let the discipline get the best of them or let it last for more than a few days, for they roamed perpetually in the woods surrounding the home at Somersby. This carefree existence was not to last for long; when he was seven, Alfred was sent to school in the nearby town of Louth; it was here that he had his first real experience in the rough world of a country school where the discipline was harsh and the manners crude. It seems as though, because of the constant fear of the master's rod and the children's bullying, Alfred little more than endured. The effects on a basically shy, reserved, and solitary-dreaming boy such as Alfred are difficult to measure.[6] But after only two years at Louth

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[6]Hugh I'Anson Fausset, Tennyson: A Modern Portrait (New York, 1923), pp. 1-44, et passim, deals quite well with the aspects of the young Tennyson's life. Although Fausset is biased more toward painting word-pictures than facts, his study of the poet's early years is interesting and demonstrates the boy to have been constantly at odds with his surroundings.

he returned to Somersby to be tutored for ten years by his well-educated father.[7]

Alfred made the fullest use of his father's ample library facilities and during the long period of instruction became quite proficient in classical literature and the art of poetics. Harold Nicolson points out that "his education in such subjects was wide rather than scholastic, imaginative rather than precise."[8] But much more importantly, Tennyson was, at this time, beginning to compose verses, ballads, and plays with echoes of Scott and Byron. Indeed, these early poetic attempts show uncommon promise; in 1826, when he was seventeen, Poems by Two Brothers appeared in print. This volume of verse by Alfred and his brother Charles shows a wide variety of subjects both grave and happy, but the gravity seems to overshadow the gaiety--especially in the poems which Alfred wrote.[9] In this youthful work one sees the beginnings of a melancholy and brooding nature of one ill at ease with his surroundings. The poems representative of Alfred's contribution to the volume

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[7]Immediately after his withdrawal from Louth, however, Alfred was sent to school in Holywell Glen. This stay was shortlived because of a heated argument between George Tennyson and the headmaster.

[8]Tennyson: Aspects of his Life, Character, and Poetry, 2nd ed. (London, 1960), p. 51.

[9]Buckley, Tennyson; p. 9.

illustrate his temperament in his pre-Cambridge and Cambridge periods.[10]

Two years after the publication of Poems by Two Brothers, and shortly after the poet's matriculation at Trinity College, Cambridge, he wrote:

> I know not how it is, but I feel isolated here in the midst of society. The country is disgustingly level, the revelry of the place so monotonous, the studies of the University so uninteresting, and so much matter of fact. None but dryheaded, angular, calculating little gentlemen can take much delight in them.[11]

Even though Tennyson did not care for the formal curriculum at the University, there was an informal gathering of minds which he did enjoy. In his first years at Cambridge he met Kemble, Milnes, Brookfield, and Spedding--some of the early members of the famous "Trinity Circle", or "Apostles," as they were commonly called. Tennyson was shortly to be drawn to this circle.

The Apostles had been organized by John Sterling, and the trend of its thought--although not always--was toward a religious radicalism. Tennyson had occasionally pondered on the current religious problems and although the Apostles seemed to be basically unprepared to answer the basic problems of religion and society, they would deal with the

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[10]Nicolson, pp. 54-5.

[11]Hallam, Lord Tennyson, Alfred, Lord Tennyson: A Memoir by His Son, 2 vols. (London, 1897), I, 34. Hereafter cited as Memoir.

hypocrisies of the day; Tennyson, as a matter of course, was drawn to their coterie once his intellectual powers had been recognized. Although Tennyson did not fully participate in the debates of the club, and although he was not a rigid non-conformist in matters of religion and society, he still had a lively imagination, the Tennyson "black-blood," and an interest in social problems.[12] The conglomerate of these things made the poet a readily acceptable member of the group. Many of the Apostles were to remain life-long friends of Tennyson and were, some of them, to attain to high positions in church and government. In short, Tennyson circulated with men who, like himself, were of high intellect, who appreciated an intercourse of ideas and opinions, who pursued knowledge, and who were interested in religious and social problems. In this milieu Tennyson was to meet Arthur Henry Hallam.

Arthur Hallam, the "prime passion" of Tennyson's whole existence,[13] arrived at Cambridge in 1828. Hallam had been a terribly precocious child, and, by the time he arrived at the University, he was more than suited for eventual

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[12]Alfred Lyall, Tennyson (New York, 1902), p. 5, points out that "Tennyson seems to be one of the few great English poets who have fallen rather readily with the customs and manners of a cultural class and their social surroundings, who did not in their youth either hold themselves apart from the ordinary life of school or college, or live recklessly, or rebel against social conventions."

[13]So described by Nicolson, p. 66.

acceptance by the intellectually rigorous Apostles. Hallam was the greatest single influence on Tennyson; their friendship has been compared to the greatest of friendships, even though it sometimes has been erroneously called homosexual. Nicolson feels that Tennyson had been awaiting a "Messiah," that Hallam came at the precise time when Tennyson considered himself to be in a state of emotional disgrace.[14] One of the few sonnets Tennyson ever wrote is based on this newly-found friendship:

> If I were loved as I desire to be,
> And what is there in the great sphere of the earth,
> And range of evil between death and birth,
> That I should fear--if I were loved by thee?
> All the inner, all the outer world of pain
> Clear love would pierce and cleave, if thou wert mine,
> As I have heard that, somewhere in the main,
> Fresh-water springs come up through bitter brine.
> 'Twere joy, not fear, claspt hand-in-hand with thee,
> To wait for death--mute--careless of all ills,
> Apart on a mountain, tho' the surge
> Of some new deluge from a thousand hills
> Flung leaves of roaring foam into the gorge
> Below us, as far as we could see.[15]

The deep friendship of Tennyson and Hallam, however, was to be broken after only five years. In the autumn of 1833 the poet received word that Hallam, at the time engaged to Tennyson's sister, Emily, had suddenly died on a trip to Vienna with his father. It is impossible to dwell on the relationship of Hallam and Tennyson--although

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[14] Tennyson, p. 71.

[15] Quoted in Nicolson, p. 73.

one is tempted--and it must suffice to point out once again the somewhat immeasurable effect of the brief acquaintance and the tragic death on In Memoriam. This will be mentioned in the chapters dealing with the poem itself.

The Memoir has preserved several poems written by Tennyson at Cambridge during the years 1828-1831, but which were never published. Many of these reflect the further development of the brooding, melancholy, despairing, and philosophical mind which is found in so much of Tennyson's poetry. But until the death of Hallam, the sense of despair which is so all-pervading in In Memoriam is still not the completely prevalent feature of the poetry of these years. We see an enjoyment of the beauty of external nature and the uneasiness of a mind confused over the enigma of human existence. But there is still a kind of spiritual positivism and quiet acceptance of things. There is still a glimmer of light in the darkness:

> Thou may'st remember what I said
> When thine own spirit was at strife
> With thine own spirit. "From the tomb
> and charnel-place of purpose dead,
> Thro' spiritual dark we come
> Into the light of spiritual life."
> God walk'd the waters of thy soul,
> And still'd them. When from change to change,
> Led silently by power divine,
> Thy thought did scale a purer range

Of prospect up to self-control,
My joy was only less than thine.[16]

Tennyson left Cambridge without obtaining a degree,[17] but before his departure he had experienced two major influences: Hallam and the Apostles' doctrine. Also, he had had his first major book of poetry published in 1830; this was his Poems, Chiefly Lyrical. Obviously, Tennyson's poetic creation while at Cambridge was not limited to a few sporadic verses with fortune enough to win a prize for one of them. The poems which did not appear in the 1830 volume were published later in 1832. Both editions represent the poet's work during his school years; "The Kraken," "Supposed Confessions of a Second-Rate Sensitive Mind," "Leonine Elegiacs," and "The Palace of Art" are only a sampling.

George Clayton Tennyson died in 1831--the same year in which the poet took an early retirement to Somersby. Alfred remained at Somersby until 1837, occasionally taking short excursions and visiting

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[16]"To--", Memoir, I, 51. There is an interesting foreshadowing here of the passage in In Memoriam (Stanza XXXI) about the "charnel-place." In 1831, only a few years later, Tennyson wrote the "Lazarus passage" dealing with the rising of Lazarus from the dead. See also Memoir, I, 92.

[17]In fact, the only official distinction he received in school was the Chancellor's Prize for his "Timbuctoo" in 1829. Fausset (Tennyson, p. 29) remarks that this poem was "admirably suited to Tennyson's condition of mind at the time insofar as it bore no relation whatever to reality."

the continent. In Europe he found a tumultuous situation in politics and society, just as he had found it in England. Although Tennyson was to remain convinced throughout his life of the worth of institutions and tradition, he seemed to welcome the reform movement in England. He was occasionally upset by periods of doubt at witnessing human misery and error. The temper of the times affected his poetry in a strange way inasmuch as his belief in tradition strengthened with age. He grew to manhood in the center of a relatively calm period which followed the years of war earlier in the century in Europe. The Crimean War some twenty years later gave Tennyson his first "taste" of the battlefield. During the calm period he concerned himself with the decadence of the church, religious worship, and social hardships. In short, the whole time seemed to produce a sense of bewilderment in Tennyson.

In the fall of 1833 Tennyson received word that Hallam was dead. For the purposes of In Memoriam this, together with the crumbling of religion in the Victorian age, should be considered as the greatest influence on Tennyson's life. The poet's will to live was almost extinguished. It was this single event, as if to bring into a personal focus the spiritual problems of the age, that caused Tennyson to doubt that the world had purpose of any kind, if man were merely a sport of the forces of nature, if God should only

be cursed, if there was any value in life.[18] It was this single event which seems to have been the guiding force in Tennyson's desire to find, or try to find, answers to the mysterious questions regarding the life of the human soul after death, the freedom of the human will, and the existence of some divine force guiding the cosmos. At this stage of his life Tennyson felt that man's existence had no meaning whatsoever; after all, Hallam had been snatched away in the prime of a productive and brilliant life. Further, Tennyson felt that his own existence had no meaning. He wrote:

> Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean,
> Tears from the depths of some divine despair
> Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,
> In looking on the happy Autumn-fields,
> And thinking of the days that are no more.
> ... ...
> O Death in Life, the days that are no more.[19]

Shortly after Hallam's death Tennyson was to begin his "ten year silence."

The period from 1833 to 1842 was one of silence only as far as actual publication of poetry was concerned. By the end of 1833 Tennyson had completed "The Two Voices,"[20]

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[18]Charles Tennyson, Alfred Tennyson (New York, 1949), p. 145.

[19]From The Princess, IV, 20-40. The Poems of Tennyson, ed. Jerome H. Buckley (Cambridge, Mass., 1958). Hereafter all line references for In Memoriam, The Princess, and Maud shall be from this edition.

[20]Originally called "Thoughts on a Suicide." Buckley, p. 63.

"Ulysses," "St. Simeon Stylites," "The Eve of St. Agnes," "Lancelot and Guinevere," and several sections of In Memoriam. The silent years afforded Tennyson much leisure time; as a result, he wrote poetry constantly but did not submit it for publication. Edward Fitzgerald wrote in a letter on the occasion of Tennyson's first break of the silence in 1842:

> Poor Tennyson has got some of his proof-sheets, and now that his verses are in hand print, he thinks them detestable. There is much I had always told him of--his great fault of being too full and complicated--which he now sees, or fancies he sees, and wishes he had never been persuaded to print. But with all his faults, he will publish such a volume as has never been published since the time of Keats, and which once published, will never be suffered to die.[21]

During these silent years, then, Tennyson wrote plentifully, and in 1842 he broke his silence with a two-volume collection of poems of such picturesqueness and moodiness as the "Marianna" poems, "The Arabian Nights," "Locksley Hall," "The Palace of Art," "The Dying Swan," "The Lady of Shalott," "The Lotos-Eaters," "The Vision of Sin," and "The Two Voices." Tennyson, by 1842, had achieved a mastery of lyrical creation. These poems all reflect in some way or another the troubled spirit of the times and the troubled spirit of Tennyson's own being. The "seed" had been planted in Tennyson by Hallam's death, it had grown during the

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[21] A letter of March, 1842, quoted in Alfred Lyall, Tennyson (London, 1902), p. 38. The recipient's name is not given.

1833-1842 period, and it was to continue to grow until it reached maturity in In Memoriam. Tennyson, during this period of his life, had experienced the hard blows of despair and had tried to resolve them. It remained for him to finish his work on the elegy. During the silent years Tennyson seems to have been afflicted with doubt and suffering. But during this time, also, he was moving toward what would eventually be his conversion experience: In Memoriam.

Although restless because of the impending move to High Beech in 1837, Tennyson benefitted from the actual move, for it widened his circle of acquaintances and heralded his engagement to Emily Sellwood. At the same time, he continued to work on the elegy to Hallam. One might say that Tennyson's actual "conversion" took place in the year of 1850, probably the most momentous year of his life. It was in this year that he published In Memoriam, became the Laureate of England, and married Emily Sellwood.

In Memoriam, with its personal strain of individual loss and its more public strain of contemporary problems, was an immediate success.[22] Tennyson had concerned himself with questions of human existence and of man's relationship to the universe. There was more, however, represented in the poem, and these things, likewise, related to the problem

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[22]Fortunately for Tennyson, for he had absorbed the entire risk of financial loss himself.

of human worth and existence. In Tennyson's time there had been the great scientific upheavals in astronomy and geology and related fields which seemed to point out the minuteness of man. The German-originated "Higher Criticism" had relegated the scriptural authority to a lower level and had somewhat denuded its meaning. Mill's theory of universal causation had undermined the idea of free will, creation, and most of what had previously been considered as the essential of Christianity.[23] In short, man and faith seemed to have no purpose--no meaning. The time of conflicting tendencies was at hand.

Tennyson was somewhat caught up in the scientific advances of his time. He saw the beauty and sublimity of the external world of nature; but he also saw the expansion of time and space by scientific discoveries, the waste and prodigality of many ages, and the impartiality of nature. To Tennyson it seemed as though science had created a sham existence and had laid claim to thoughts which would threaten any sort of belief in immortality or future life. The advances of science had tried, it seemed, to eliminate belief and faith from the world. The final picture seemed to be one of man being sublimated to unending mutability and tumbling in "The Godless deep."

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[23]Charles Tennyson, p. 250.

In 1852, Hallam, the first of the Tennysons' children, was born; Lionel was born in 1854. By this time Tennyson had settled into a relatively calm state of mind--almost as though he had experienced a spiritual rehabilitation through the finished In Memoriam. Tennyson's residence at Farringford, where the family moved in 1853 on leaving Twickenham, was, however, not passed in isolation. This period of his life was almost completely opposite to that of the silent years. There were many visits from men of letters, dignitaries, and family friends. The receiving of the laurel in 1850 made Tennyson a well known public figure. The family travelled throughout England and at one time, in 1851, travelled to Italy. The residences at Twickenham and Farringford in the fifties began what has been said to be the happiest years of the poet's life.[24]

The last months of 1854 were devoted to the composition of Maud, a difficult monodrama based on a lyric he had written in 1837.[25] On the basis of this lyric, Tennyson began to envision a story about a morbid and solitary young man who was the victim of a family tragedy. It is notable, says Fausset, that the ideas of both Maud and the Idylls were not original but were based upon and were enlargements

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[24]Charles Tennyson, p. 278.

[25]See Maud, Pt. II, II, 49-131, for the so-called "Shell" lyric.

of sketches in Tennyson's earlier, more creative years.[26] It was almost as though Tennyson was beginning to pass noticeably into his years as a prophet--a public image--for shortly after the epistle in Maud to the glories and virtues of the Crimean War, Tennyson produced "The Charge of the Light Brigade." With these two publications Tennyson became a highly accepted and revered Laureate; he was, indeed, a poet of the people.[27] He was a poet of the people rather than a poet of himself. From this point on his poetic quality began to make a general decline, although his popularity increased in inverse proportion. Indeed, this was to be expected, for he gave to his readers what they wanted to see. No longer did he seem to be concerned with moral and spiritual problems; rather, he seemed to be more concerned with paeans to the glories of England and its future. Rather than despairing over man's situation in the world and man's submission to the natural sciences,

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[26] Tennyson, p. 184.

[27] An interesting example of Tennyson's own views on this is found in a letter of August 11, 1855 to one Mr. Massey in which the poet tells of the reception of "The Charge of the Light Brigade": ". . .The Secretary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel said that the ballad had in some strange way taken the fancy of the soldiers: that half of them were singing it but that they only know it in fragments and that all of them want it in black and white. The Chaplain of the society wrote: 'You can do no greater service just now than to send out copies of the Charge on slips for the army to sing.' Who could resist such an appeal? This is the soldier's version & I dare say that they are the best critics. . ." "Daniel Coit Gilman Collection of Letters," Milton Eisenhower Library, Johns Hopkins University.

he now sought to express notions about the world, man's situation in it, and how man should live in the world of society. Tennyson was now the teacher rather than the poet. To paraphrase one criterion of the prophet concept in Victorian literature, Tennyson seemed to teach the acquisition of wisdom and the opening of the eyes; he tried to make his readers more perceptive and he tried to offer solutions for social problems.[28] After In Memoriam only occasionally did Tennyson resort to the device of personal outpouring of emotion for his poetry. His purpose was now to instruct.

Tennyson, in his years as a prophet, travelled extensively to Ireland, Spain, Germany, America, France, Italy, Scotland, Norway, and Switzerland. During these years he was happier than he had ever been.[29] At least he did not forget his poetry, from the standpoint of his being considered a poetic emissary. His travels and his own view of himself led him to feel the need to express his thoughts on national problems on the home front. His efforts were apparently fruitful: in 1865 and again in 1868 he was offered a baronetcy for his devotion to the crown but he refused them both, only to accept the award in 1884. Tennyson seems to have achieved mature happiness at the expense of his poetry. In the years after In Memoriam he

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[28]John Holloway, The Victorian Sage: Studies in Argument, 2nd ed. (New York, 1965), pp. 9-10.

[29]Fausset, p. 198.

was not concerned with the problems of revising his opinions or his temperaments; he accepted his own judgments as final and his own interpretations of life as adequate. Finally, he had no critics to speak of. It was as though poetry had become a hobby to a master craftsman.[30]

Tennyson's domestic and poetic felicity is shown by many of his post-1850 poems. Enoch Arden, for example, with its simplicity, reflects a simple fishing village and its humble occupants tainted with the possibility of an illegitimate child. Even in this poetically fruitful setting, Tennyson seems to have made the poem more of a piece to express his own views on the public. It was, after all, expected of Tennyson to do this; he was not just Mr. Tennyson, he was the poet of the times and of England. The sale of his poetry was, as a result of his pandering to this expectation, phenomenal. The voice of the critics was nothing more than a "defiant squeak of paradox."[31]

The first installment of the Idylls of the King was published in 1859, although several copies of the first two Idylls in cruder form were privately printed in 1857 with the title of "Enid and Nimue." Four additional Arthurian legends were added in 1869, two in 1872, and one in 1885. Tennyson, in his earlier years, had been fascinated by the

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[30] Ibid., p. 199.

[31] Nicolson, Tennyson, p. 184.

Arthurian material and for several years had considered the possibility of composing a national epic. The overwhelming acceptance of the 1859 publication combined with his new outlook on his poetic role convinced him of the fruitfulness of carrying out his idea for an Arthuriad. Needless to say, Tennyson did not have the frame of mind to compose a strictly medieval-based epic. His characters are not feudal--they are members of the nineteenth century English aristocracy. His poetic effects are not those of mere medieval romances but rather, of spiritual teaching and moralizing. Tennyson saw the lessons to be learned from the age of chivalry and recast them into a contemporary mold.

Nicolson points out that the last twenty years of Tennyson's life is the story of Farringford on an ampler scale.[32] There was a great increase in his production with such poems as "The Holy Grail," "The Flower in the Crannied Wall," "The Higher Pantheism," and "Lucretius" in 1870. In 1885 and 1886 he published "Tirosias," "The Ancient Sage," and "Locksley Hall Sixty Years After." These latter poems were marked, it seems, by a reappearing doubt in Tennyson, now that he was approaching his last days. They reflect a doubt very similar to that prior to 1850. Tennyson's late years were marked by poor health and personal loss. In 1879

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[32] Ibid., p. 185.

his brother Charles, and in 1886 Lionel, his second son, had died. The death of his son affected his health seriously and by 1888 he was confined mainly to his room. These last few years gave Tennyson ample time to reflect upon his past life and upon his duty to England. One statement he made in 1887 should serve to summarize his feelings after 1850:

> "It seems to me as if there were much less of the old reverence and chivalrous feeling in the world than there used to be. . .I tried in my Idylls to teach men these things and the need of the Ideal. But I feel sometimes as if my life had been a useless life."[33]

In the fall of 1892, Tennyson's health visibly worsened. It is interesting to note that he pleaded with Jowett, a long-time friend and conversation partner, not to argue with him on points of religion and philosophy; the family saw this request as a foreboding of death.[34] Fausset speaks of Tennyson's unsure faith in the last few months of his life and points to his questioning of friends on matters of faith and creed.[35] But Tennyson had written in "The Ancient Sage" of his hope to see "The placid gleam of sunset after storm!" (133) and had resolved much earlier to "cling to Faith beyond the forms of Faith." ("The Ancient Sage," 64) After examining the proofs of "The Death of Oenone," he died on October 6, 1892.

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[33]Quoted in Nicolson, p. 205.

[34]Ibid., p. 206.

[35]Tennyson, p. 278.

He had had a tempestuous early life, but from 1850 to his death in 1892 he seems to have made amends with himself by living a well-ordered life. It is not the purpose of this paper to pass judgment upon the poet's life. It remains, however, to examine the vehicle by which Tennyson achieved his transition from spiritual turmoil to spiritual tranquility.

CHAPTER II: THE PHILOSOPHY OF CHRISTIAN EXISTENTIALISM

THE FOUNDATION OF CHRISTIAN EXISTENTIALISM

Existentialism, in its basic ramifications, looks with a jaundiced eye upon any system of thought that proposes itself to be the solution for all life's crises. Kierkegaard, with his doctrine of inwardness, began to philosophize with the distinct purpose of discovering difficulties rather than offering easy-sounding solutions; for indeed, there are no "easy" solutions. Existentialism began with Kierkegaard's attempt to assert religious values against the materialistic trend of nineteenth century thought. But he was not rebelling strictly against materialist notions--he was, more specifically, rebelling against the pattern of Hegelian idealism which believed that there is a unity in Thought and Being and which tried to show that the mind is able to think its object because all nature and all history are in themselves the means by which thought becomes an object to itself,[1] just as I know myself by what I have become. In other words, what we now call Christian existentialism began as a voice raised in protest against what Kierkegaard felt was absurdity of Pure Thought, a logic which is not the logic of thinking but the imminent movements of Being.[2]

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[1]H. J. Blackham, Six Existentialist Thinkers (New York, 1952; reprinted New York, 1959), p. 7.

[2]I use the term "Christian existentialism" as applicable to Kierkegaard because of his unshakable faith in the existence of God. See Hazel Barnes, Humanistic Existentialism: The Literature of Possibility, 2nd ed. (Lincoln, Nebr., 1965). Originally published as The Literature of Possibility: Studies in Humanistic Existentialism (Lincoln, Nebr., 1959), p. 49.

It can be said that re-creation by self-analysis is one of the most fundamental meanings of existentialism.[3] The artist, poet, or philosopher represents the highest consciousness of an age and must try to extend that consciousness to others--his viewers, readers, or disciples. Kierkegaard's philosophy, in this perspective, attempts to make man aware of certain basic realities of life itself; in this sense, it can be said to increase rather than decrease the problems of existence.[4] In other words, if a problem is present but is unknown to man, then it will not bother him; but if the problem is brought to his attention, then he will be aware of it and will be concerned with it; therefore, he will be confronted with an additional problem and the number of problems will pyramid. The process of attempting to offer <u>possible</u> solutions, however, can only come after this initial awareness is achieved. To furnish this initial awareness is the concern of Kierkegaard's philosophy.

For a person to exist is for that person to be concerned with existence, to regard the omnipresent danger of death as a danger of the first order. In the presence of this constant danger and this constant awareness of the difference

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[3]Colin Wilson, <u>Religion and the Rebel</u> (London, 1957), p. 657.

[4]William Barret, "Existentialism as a Symptom of Man's Contemporary Crisis," in <u>Spiritual Problems in Contemporary Literature</u>, ed. Stanley R. Hopper (New York, 1952), p. 137.

between life and death--between finitude and infinity--man involves himself in a state of "passion-filled awareness."[5] Existentialism attempts to arouse the human consciousness to the realities of human life--as banal as they may sometimes seem: life itself, death, anxiety, frustration, freedom, guilt, and so forth. All these basic realities serve to enmesh man in the state of "passion-filled awareness." The ultimate point upon which existential philosophy turns, however, is the difference between being and nothingness.[6] The problem that literary history seems to have found to be most pressing for the poet is the concern for this difference. Hazel Barnes points out that all existential writers offer, "each in his own way, a challenge to conventional moral order, a sense of urgency in matters of conscience, an interest in the private introspections of the individual."[7] Tennyson was no exception. He, too, was deeply aware of life, death, and the other "life-realities," but his awareness laid, in the Kierkegaardian sense, in a placement of faith rather than in the Sartrean sense of life being

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[5]This phrase is found throughout Kierkegaard's works; it would be fruitless to document each instance.

[6]For the most significant contemporary exposition of this idea, see Jean-Paul Sartre's Being and Nothingness, trans. Hazel Barnes (New York, 1965).

[7]Barnes, Humanistic Existentialism, pp. 155-6.

nothing more than a miserable chain of events which one is forced to endure. Tennyson's awareness is more of a finding of consolation in faith rather than drifting in a life which keeps man inter spem et metum and leads him to nothing but death.

Philosophical thinking for Kierkegaard does not begin from metaphysical speculation or from a concern with epistemological thinking. It begins, rather, with man as a subjective individual who yearns for certainty in regard to the meaning and destiny of his own existence.[8] This concern arises from the idea that man is a synthesis of the finite and the infinite, a synthesis of which one becomes cognizant according to the degree of development of his subjectivity. The person with a heightened sense of inwardness

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[8]Walter Lowrie points out that in Kierkegaard's language, "to exist" does not mean the same thing as "to be." He says that Kierkegaard views the word etymologically and sees that ex istere means "to stand out from." He goes on to say that "life" might be the meaning of "to exist" because of Kierkegaard's belief that Christianity is not essentially a doctrine but rather an existential communication. Introduction to the Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p. xviii.

which reaches its peak in passion[9]--the culmination for the existing individual--arrives at the point of faith in which "the particular individual is able to realize existentially a unity of the infinite and finite which transcends existence."[10]

For Kierkegaard, faith, like thought, is a dialectic between subject and object. But in faith the tension between the subject and object acquires passion because the subject is greatly interested in itself and because the object is not the sole result of reason. Subject and

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[9]The "passion" of which Kierkegaard speaks is not to be confused with the connotation which the word has in our own culture, where most generally it is associated with the erotic. Passion, as Kierkegaard uses it, is born specifically from the concern of the individual over the possibility of eternal happiness. It is the highest expression of one's subjectivity and must be present in the individual in order for the individual to apprehend God; God exists, in this philosophy, only by subjectivity. He is not a reality to him who approaches God objectively. As man's passion is brought nearer to the point of despair, he embraces God in faith, for the postulation of God will have become a life-necessity. The height of passion, then, is faith, and faith is the prerequisite for the apprehension of God.

[10]Postscript, p. 176. There is an interesting parallel here between the Christian existentialism of Kierkegaard and mysticism. Notice for example, the similarity between Kierkegaard's statement and mystical thought, which, in its most essential form, is a type of philosophy which puts the "emphasis on immediate awareness of relation to God, direct and intimate consciousness of Divine Presence," Dagobert Runes, ed. Dictionary of Philosophy, 15th ed. (revised New York, 1960), p. 203. The difference between the two philosophies lies, however, in that Christian Existentialism holds that the "consciousness of Divine Presence" must be at the complete rejection of objectivity.

object are fundamentally opposed in faith, and the acceptance of information given by faith is achieved by a process which goes much deeper than it would by purely objective reflection.[11] A faith which presents itself as objectively true is no faith at all for Kierkegaard. If one attempts to find faith in such a manner, then he will be doomed to failure. Faith rests ultimately on passion and on the free decision of the individual; thus, it depends, in the final analysis, on subjectivity. No sort of objectivity can relieve man of the responsibility to choose for himself. As Kierkegaard put it:

> Hence we do not here raise the question of the truth of Christianity in the sense that when this has been determined the subject is assumed ready and willing to accept it. No, the question is as to the mode of the subject's acceptance; and it must be regarded as an illusion. . .to assume that the transition from something objective to the subjective acceptance is a direct transition following upon the objective deliberation as a matter of course. On the contrary, the subjective acceptance is precisely the decisive factor; and an objective acceptance of Christianity. . .is paganism or thoughtlessness.[12]

Objective approaches to Christianity and faith, then, are meaningless for Kierkegaard. He rejects any objective foundation of faith and replaces it by a subjective proof, or passion of feeling:

> There is only one proof for the truth of Christianity, and that is precisely the pathological proof: when the

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[11]Louis Dupré, Kierkegaard as Theologian: The Dialectic of Christian Existence (New York, 1963), p. 18.

[12]Postscript, pp. 114-15.

> anguish of sin and the pangs of his conscience force a man to cross the narrow dividing line which separates the despair bordering on madness and. . .Christianity. There lies Christianity.[13]

The passion of faith can never be upset, according to Kierkegaard, by rational examinations. The passion of faith takes man beyond rational and objective thought into a new world; this new world, like faith, can never be subjugated by pure thought and rationality.

Kierkegaard's existentialism is further delineated through his polemic against Hegel. Hegel personified the purely objective thinker who removes himself from any inwardness--from the existential pathos. Kierkegaard felt that such a philosophy is comical because the philosopher is forever dealing in abstractions and only abstractions--even to the point that he forgets his own existence. Hegel's concern for world history has, to Kierkegaard, obscured his more proper cause of self-understanding. If Kierkegaard were living, he would probably ask to what purpose is knowledge of the world, of nature, of systems of thought, if one has not come fully to grips with the problems of his own existence and has not sought to understand himself?

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[13] On Authority and Revelation: The Book on Adler, trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton, 1955), p. 467.

The subject of philosophy is man; to Kierkegaard, philosophy means the living of one's own philosophy.[14]

Kierkegaard closes his first major work, Either/Or, with the words, "Only the truth that edifies is truth for you."[15] This might be a suitable theme to characterize his entire outlook. Truth is only that which is truth for me, which enables me to understand myself, to see myself in relationship to God, and to act accordingly--or to exist accordingly. Truth becomes truth when it is existentially appreciated, when one commits himself to it:

> . . .what good would it do me if truth stood before me, cold and naked, not caring whether I recognized her or not, and producing in me a shudder of fear rather than a trusting devotion?[16]

Kierkegaard is, of course, referring not to objective, factual truth, which demands no subjective commitment, but

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[14]The extent to which this was true in Kierkegaard's own life is nothing short of amazing. A highly interesting and revealing account of his life as it was lived during the production of his "aesthetic works" and then as it correspondingly changed as he became a more specifically religious writer is found in his The Point of View for my Work as an Author, (1859), trans. Walter Lowrie (New York, 1939; 2nd ed. New York, 1962), p. 49ff.

[15]Either/Or: A Fragment of Life, 2 vols. Vol. I trans. David F. Swenson and Lillian Marvin Swenson, Vol. II trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton, 1944), II, 294.

[16]The Journals of Kierkegaard, ed. and trans. Alexander Dru (New York, 1938), 22. Number refers to entry. Hereafter cited as Journal. On some occasions page numbers will be used; this is due to a loss of access to the original translation of the Journal. The issue in which the entries are listed by number will be noted.

to religious truth which, he feels, is not really truth for anyone until he relates to it existentially and subjectively.

Most of Kierkegaard's works were precipitated by external events which compelled him to write. He made no attempt to construct a systematic philosophy and would, if he were living, deplore any efforts to glean his writings with the intention of constructing what might be called "his philosophy." The impetus for his major philosophical work, the Concluding Unscientific Postscript, was simply his recognition of the belief that Christianity was in desperate need of being released from the philosophical speculation which all but threatened to swallow the Gospel and the Church dogma. This was of the utmost concern to Kierkegaard, for Christianity had to do with his own "eternal happiness," and there is nothing of greater importance to the subjective individual than this.

Kierkegaard's reaction to the speculative and objective viewpoints of his age was an ingenious program which he carried out in the works subsequent to and including the Postscript. His contemporaries, he felt, had simply forgotten how to exist. They no longer knew what inwardness meant. Kierkegaard perceived that his task of bringing this to their attention would entail a Socratic method: it would have to be done indirectly. Accordingly, he placed

before his readers certain characters expressing various outlooks on life:[17] the hollow enjoyment and despair of the man living in aesthetic categories whose aim it is to exploit life for as much as he can get out of it, the ethical individual who has realized the futility of the aesthetic life and who sees as his ultimate concern the living of a life more commensurate with the "Divine Requirement," and finally, the religious individual whose life is lived in devotion to his God. In a word, for Kierkegaard philosophy begins and ends with itself.

Man is concerned with time; he is concerned with identifying himself with infinity--the unidentifiable, as it were. Thus, man exists in a state of paradox. Kierkegaard looked upon such a paradox as tolerable <u>if</u> man could accept it as being beyond his reasoning abilities but within reach of his faith:

> . . .everyone for himself, in quiet inwardness before God, shall humble himself before what is to be in the strictest sense a Christian, admit candidly before God how it stands with him, so that he might yet accept the grace which is offered to everyone who is imperfect, that is, to everyone.[18]

Faith, for Kierkegaard, is not a form of knowledge. He writes in the <u>Philosophical Fragments</u>:

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[17] In <u>Either/Or</u>, <u>Stages on Life's Way</u>, <u>Fear and Trembling</u>, and <u>Repetition</u>.

[18] <u>Training in Christianity</u>, trans. Walter Lowrie, (Princeton, 1944), p. 71.

> It is easy to see, though it scarcely needs to be pointed out, since it is involved in the fact that Reason is set aside, that faith is not a form of knowledge; for all knowledge is either a knowledge of the eternal, excluding the temporal and historical as indifferent, or it is pure historical knowledge. No knowledge can have for its object the absurdity that the eternal is the historical. If I know Spinoza's doctrine, then I am in so far not concerned with Spinoza but with his doctrine; at some other time I may be concerned with Spinoza himself. But the disciple is in faith so related to his teacher as to be concerned eternally with his historical existence.[19]

That is to say that knowledge is either of self-evident propositions or a priori truths like those in mathematics, or it is of empirical propositions which can be investigated, for which evidence can be adduced and which can be made probable. But a contradiction can belong to neither of these two classes. Since the absolute paradox is in a class by itself, since it is neither an a priori truth nor an ordinary investigable historical fact, it follows that the relation to it must be other than a knowledge relation. To be other than a knowledge relation, then, the absolute paradox must be found by inwardness.

Neither is faith an act of will. Kierkegaard says:

> It is easy to see, though it scarcely needs to be pointed out, since it is involved in the fact that the Reason is set aside, that faith is not an act of will; for all human volition has its capacity within the scope of an underlying condition. Thus if I have the courage to will the understanding, I am able to understand the Socratic principle, i.e., to understand myself; because from the Socratic point of view I have the condition, and so have the power to will the understanding. But

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[19] Trans. David F. Swenson (Princeton, 1941), pp. 49-50.

> if I do not have the condition (and this is our assumption, in order not to be forced back on the Socratic order of things), all my willing is of no avail; although as soon as the condition is given, the Socratic principle will again apply.[20]

This is to say that all the determination and effort of will in the world cannot accomplish that for which one lacks the capacity. It is as though a man who had no eyes could, by willing, force himself to see. A man cannot decide to recognize his sins and to acknowledge God as he may decide to give up smoking.[21] It is, therefore, that God must first grant the condition or the capacity, and that He, Himself, must give man the power to will that for which man has no aptitude. "Faith," therefore, is in itself a paradox and a miracle which no man can understand; it, too, is unique and involves the one who speaks about it in contradictions: ". . .faith is as paradoxical as the paradox. . . .Faith is itself a miracle, and all that holds true of the Paradox, holds true of faith."[22]

"Faith" as it is ordinarily used is usually connected with probability.[23] After a degree of probability has been

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[20] Ibid., pp. 50-1.

[21] Cf. 1 Corinthians 12:2: "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."

[22] Philosophical Fragments, p. 53.

[23] See Fear and Trembling, where the "faith" of Abraham is distinguished absolutely from all other forms of belief and is put into a class of its own.

established for the truth of a historical event, then one believes it. Or after a degree of probability has been established for the favorable outcome of an undertaking, then one has the courage to try it. And even if the general opinion is against the undertaking and the person is called a fool, he will still go on with the venture. But there are some things, such as God, for which no degree of probability can be established, and so the reason is only repelled. And yet there can still be a God-wrought subjective confidence--a passion of inwardness--in the unknown realm of spiritual matters.

Faith, then is something unique to be distinguished from all other forms of belief. Faith is not something original with man, as though he could, either by clear thinking, or by an act of will, produce it. Faith is an act of God. Faith is God drawing a man into Himself. Faith is that passion wherein man is united with God, not in knowledge, but in a different sort of inward feeling--a feeling which in Kierkegaard's works conveys the impression of love, but yet which has no real analogy, so amid the general purposelessness of life, amid the drifting in nothingness, man sets himself to the task of recapturing the sense of life.

THE CHRISTIAN EXISTENTIAL DIALECTIC

Kierkegaard believed that man passes through three distinct stages, the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious.[24] The aesthetic stage the philosopher comprehends as man's relation to nature and the surrounding world; but this stage is inadequate because the universe itself is an inadequate tutor in the self's moral obligations. One who lives in the aesthetic stage plays emotionally and imaginatively with all possibilities, renounces nothing, commits himself as little as possible, enjoys a dilletantish belief in all faiths and customs, is ruled by the desires of the moment, and is subject to the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune."[25] In other words, one knows the world without knowing himself.

There are many natural mysteries which will only confuse a mind such as man's with a limited insight into the workings of nature. It is this limited insight which causes man to pass on to the ethical stage. But it must originally be combined with the awareness of living a sham existence. In the ethical stage man is required to understand certain

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[24]Although all men do not actually pass through the religious stage, it is, nevertheless, a distinct part of the dialectic as established by Kierkegaard and must be treated as such. For a simplified outline of the dialectic see Appendix A of this thesis.

[25]This idea is expressed in Blackham, Six Existentialist Thinkers, p. 10.

circumstances which he is incapable of explaining by reason or by logic. To live in the ethical stage is to commit oneself beyond mere fortune and misfortune, beyond the living between hope and fear, by a sort of infinite moral resignation. Here, man must eliminate deliberation and aesthetic research into the workings of nature. Here man is required to cut short intellectual and reasoned decisions pertaining to the unknown; the aesthetic and the intellectual must be subordinated to the ethical sphere of existence where the self is defined morally, but not yet religiously, and the all-important problem of the self's existence beyond the finity of mortal time is not resolved.[26] But it is here that man strives to be "good."[27] And here also it is the task of every individual to become an entire man. But man in the ethical stage is still plagued by a non-resolution about the problem of life and death--although he is able to accept death at this stage with not as much heart-ache as the previous stage.

For the final resolution of doubt, Kierkegaard defines as being necessary a "leap of faith" which will carry an

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[26]F. J. Hoffman, The Mortal No: Death and the Modern Imagination (Princeton, 1964), p. 427.

[27]Walter Lowrie, Kierkegaard, 2 vols. (New York and London, 1938; reprinted New York, 1962), I, p. 150.

individual from the ethical stage of non-resolution to the religious stage of reconciliation of the temporal life with the eternal life, of existence with non-existence, of life with death.[28] The truth of faith, says Dupré, is this: "that one commit oneself and risk his life for a truth which one does not possess, but which is posited by the commitment itself."[29] The act of faith thus requires the making of a personal choice and by liberating oneself from all objectivity. All one has to do is to be concerned solely with himself, but this is sufficient for him because, as Kierkegaard says, "to become subjective is the most difficult of all tasks."[30] For man to free himself from doubt and despair, then, he must choose himself in the sight of God, almost mystically within himself. This is actually the so-called "absolute paradox," for the absolute paradox is reached when man reaches the ultimate in subjectivity. Man's relationship with God, then, takes on a transcendent quality even though all efforts to understand are in vain. Speculative understanding is powerless and fruitless before this absolute paradox. To explain it is to destroy it and faith will be lost once again. The only explanation is that it is inexplicable.

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[28] Søren Kierkegaard, The Sickness Unto Death, trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton, 1941), p. 12.

[29] Kierkegaard as Theologian, p. 125.

[30] Postscript, p. 115.

Kierkegaard believes that the despair of man is caused by another paradox resulting from the tension of the finite and infinite in man. The presence of this paradox and its accompanying despair in all men are what Kierkegaard calls the "sickness unto death." Simply stated, this means that man is in a state of disillusionment over his self and over his consciousness. Man, for the most part, leads an inauthentic existence by living in the aesthetic stage and becomes distressed by his lack of--or supposed lack of--eternality. And the more awareness of this discrepancy the more despair; or, as Kierkegaard puts it:

> With every increase in the degree of consciousness, and in proportion to that increase, the intensity of despair increases; the more consciousness, the more intense the despair.[31]

But by a transportation from the aesthetic to the ethical to the religious stage, a man can resolve himself to a "higher goodness" by simply accepting the inevitability of death at the end of life and somethingness. In this fashion, one may gradually overcome the despair and find the "still, small voice" which points the way to eternity.[32]

Kierkegaard not only views despair in terms of a "synthesized self," or of a conflict between finity and infinity, he also views it as an aspect of consciousness

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[31] The Sickness Unto Death, p. 34.

[32] Thomas H. Croxall, Kierkegaard Studies (London, 1948), p. 144.

versus unconsciousness.[33] Unconscious despair occurs because man does not want to consider the facing of truth as the highest good; instead, he wishes to keep his illusions; he tries to keep his illusion.[34] Man erects a sort of vast metaphysical system about himself in which to seek refuge. If this private universe is disturbed--if this philosophical introversion is disrupted--then man encounters despair, and his problems of existence are further compounded. One sees, then, that man has a despair of weakness in which he is enslaved by a set of external circumstances,[35] and that as he begins to realize his troubles are both internally and externally focused, he feels that he is the passive victim of his own defects and nothing more.

The despair of weakness may also be found in men who strive for eternity and immortality, but who have given up along the way because of the intense agony of the tension

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[33]Søren Kierkegaard, The Concept of Dread, trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton, 1944), p. 36.

[34]Wylie Sipher's comment on this idea is rather significant: "For more than a century the rebel has insisted that existence is absurd, that man does not live authentically until he accepts the inexplicable. This is one of the central themes among the existentialists, who carry on a romantic quest for the self and its meaning. Like the immoralists of the nineteenth century, existentialists reaffirm the incompetence of reason or logic to explain, or even guide, our deeply lived experiences." Loss of the Self in Modern Literature and Art (New York, 1962; reprinted New York, 1964) p. 20.

[35]David E. Roberts, Existentialism and Religious Belief (New York, 1957), p. 120.

between life and death. Salvation may be at hand by making the leap of faith which will carry man to the religious stage of being. The boundary, then, between life and death and its influence upon man because of his awareness of it, can be transcended by man's innate capacity for attempting to transcend the boundary. But one does not become an ethical or a religious person simply by a decision, per se, as when one decides red instead of blue. Such a becoming involves a choosing of oneself in the face of despair (the ethical) or, at the ultimate extreme, the leap of faith in which one commits his life to God in spite of and in the face of his offense to reason.[36]

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[36]It should be mentioned, however, that Kierkegaard was careful to point out that even the capability for the leap exists universally in all souls; but man seldom uses it to his advantage, and thereby leaves himself in the state of despair and paradox.

CHAPTER III: TENNYSON, *IN MEMORIAM*, AND DESPAIR

TENNYSON AND DESPAIR

Despair is an attitude of mind that has tended to reappear in periods when profound changes in the intellectual and social milieu have produced in thinking men a feeling of disillusionment with the age. Alfred Tennyson, through most of his life, was greatly interested in the problems of philosophy, and his own attempts to work out a personal philosophical view influenced his work and were a constant source of his poetical inspiration. It has been said that Tennyson as poet and philosopher approaches a degree of Stoicism,[1] but by the sheer weight of his despair in In Memoriam he goes far beyond Stoicism.

A reasoning man, in the Stoic philosophy, has to submit to the course of the world. Stoicism is a system of thought that since classical times has appealed to intelligent, rational men wherever a classical influence has been felt.[2] Since an ethical influence has been its chief contribution, it has afforded to those in need of spiritual peace a satisfaction for religious cravings and a support for the moral life. The aim of the Stoic philosopher in an age of social and intellectual confusion such as the

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[1]Evelyn A. Hanley, Stoicism in Major English Poets of the Nineteenth Century (New York, 1964), is probably the best example.

[2]For an excellent discussion see Gilbert Highet, The Classical Tradition: Greek and Roman Influences on Western Literature (New York, 1957).

nineteenth century is the avoidance of external disturbances by a withdrawal to the subjective self for the attainment of peace within the self. He realizes this peace through a cultivation of the intellect and an exercise of the will which imposes upon him a resignation to the course of outward events. By drawing inward, man feels himself to be one with the universe, or at once a brother of the universe and of men.[3] On this score, Stoicism is similar to Christian existentialism, but Kierkegaard's philosophy goes further.

As I pointed out in the previous chapter, one of the main points of Christian existentialism is the process of subjective and inward examination of the self. Kierkegaard held that to submit most thoroughly to subjectivity the reason must be almost completely forsaken. For Kierkegaard, many things in the universe are beyond man's reasoning capabilities; man can accept them if he considers them to be within reach of his faith. I pointed out that faith, in the Kierkegaardian sense, is not a "form of knowledge." As I see it, the most important difference between Stoicism and Christian existentialism lies in the concept of faith. Whereas Stoic philosophy seeks a comfort based upon an independence from externals and a reliance

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[3]Eduard Zeller, The Stoics, Epicureans, and Sceptics (London and New York, 1892), p. 342.

upon the life of the mind, Christian existentialism holds that it is the conglomeration of externals which man must consider in order to accept or reject them. Like Stoicism, it is through the process of subjective examination that he accomplishes this, but unlike Stoicism, in existentialism the faith of man must be utilized.

Tennyson's pre-Cambridge poems were written, it seems, as a direct result of his unhappy temperament. He inherited the famous Tennyson "black-blood," and every Tennyson student knows of the poet's frequent visits to the graveyard, where he longed to die, because of his father's fits of violence. His home-life intensified the dark gloominess of the young poet. His earliest poems reveal a constant feeling of loneliness and exile: "The Exile's Harp," "We Meet No More," "I Wander in Darkness and Sorrow," "Written by an Exile of Bassorah," "The Outcast," to name a few. The theme is similar throughout the juvenalia: the speaker is "unfriended and cold, and alone"; his friends all die and leave him "lorn and lonely"; he will "never again see" the ones he loves; his "every hope on earth is past"; he resigns himself to be an exile or "a hopeless outcast."[4] Very few happy moments present themselves in the early works.

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[4]See Claude deL. Ryals, Theme and Symbol in Tennyson's Poems to 1850 (Philadelphia, 1964), p. 18.

As a result, the picture of Tennyson's life as reflected by the juvenile poems is not a very pleasant one. If the speaker or speakers in these poems ever do find any degree of happiness, it is usually in the form of a remembrance of beauty and happiness--the memory of some day which can never return.

It is seen that as early as the poet's college days, and even before, he conceived himself to be a victim of unrelenting circumstances in an external world. In a letter to Emily Sellwood Tennyson wrote, "Why has God created souls knowing they would sin and suffer?"[5] His personal reconciliation with these two problems could only come about as a result of a forceful application of his own subjectivity and spiritual honesty. Tennyson's groping for subjectivity can be observed throughout the early poems as paralleling the motif of despair. There is a glimmer of hope in a fragment of a poem found in the poet's notebook, but the piece itself does not sound very optimistic in its outlook:

> Over the dark world flies the wind
> And clatters in the sapless trees,
> From cloud to cloud in darkless blind
> Quick stars sound o'er the sounding seas:
> I look: the showery skirts unbind:
> Mars by the lonely Pleiades

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[5] Memoir, I, 168.

Burns overhead: with brows declined
I muse: I wander from my peace,
And still divide the rapid mind
This way and that in search of ease.[6]

The hope reflected here recurs in many of Tennyson's following poems: "Supposed Confessions of a Second-Rate Sensitive Mind," "Oenone," "The Lady of Shalott," "The Poet," and "The Palace of Art," to name a few. But these poems always present antagonistic antitheses to any glimpses of hope, faith, illusion, and involvement: despair, doubt, reality, and distance. The contraries shown here are always present in Tennyson's poetical works prior to 1850.[7] They have been said to be reconciliations of truth and reality. They have been said to present the poet's ability to establish a wisdom in truth. They have been said to show the artist in relation to the reflection of the mirror of the real world. These points are all eventually brought out in certain of the pre-1850 poems. But the predominant theme in all the poems, it seems, is the perpetual grasping for faith--a theme which is given final motivation and final clarity in In Memoriam.

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[6]"Fragment," Unpublished Early Poems by Alfred Tennyson, ed. Charles Tennyson (New York, 1932), p. 72. Charles Tennyson points out in his note to this poem that the idea presented is "characteristic of Tennyson's. . .poetry during the early In Memoriam period" and that "MS evidence suggests that many sections of In Memoriam were founded on brief mood pictures" such as are found in this fragment.

[7]An excellent discussion of these contraries is to be found in Allan Danzig, "The Contraries: A Central Concept in Tennyson's Poetry," PMLA, LXVII (1962), 577-585.

THE EXPRESSION OF DESPAIR

Ryals mentions that In Memoriam began as the "lyric expression of private grief" but broadened into an attempt to probe and answer the spiritual problems of the age.[8] This is an accurate analysis; poetry does indeed mirror the feelings and currents of the age in which it is produced. But if one is to consider In Memoriam in the light of the framework established in the preface--that the poem can be considered a self-purgation for the poet--we can say that it was more precisely an attempt to answer the spiritual problems of the poet:

> And all the phantom, Nature, stands--
> With all the music in her tone,
> A hollow echo of my own,--
> A hollow form with empty hands.
>
> And shall I take a thing so blind,
> Embrace her as my natural good;
> Or crush her, like a vice of blood,
> Upon the threshold of the mind?
> (III, 9-16)

At this early point in the poem, Tennyson is quavering before the "hollow form" of reality and truth and Nature. He sits "within a helmless bark" (IV, 3) and asks, "What is it makes me beat so low?" (IV, 8) Kierkegaard had previously expressed the same feeling when he entered the following lines in the Journal:

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[8] Theme and Symbol, p. 195.

> I feel so dull and completely without joy, my soul is so empty and void that I cannot even conceive what could satisfy--oh, not even the blessedness of heaven.[9]

Both Kierkegaard and Tennyson seem to express, in these lines, the futility of the world of reality and knowledge. They both seem to have abandoned the power of or the desire to use reason. But the important point is that they both have examined themselves inwardly and have found themselves to be wanting.

In In Memoriam Tennyson tells of his lack of expression for his grief and of his supposed "lack" of inward examination:

> I sometimes hold it half a sin
> To put in words the grief I feel:
> For words, like Nature, half reveal
> And half conceal the soul within.
> (V, 1-4)

And a few lines later, he reveals that he will conceal by "words, like weeds, the large grief which these enfold." (V, 9-12) Kierkegaard had pointed out in 1835 that "one must know himself before knowing anything else. . . .It is only after a man has thus understood himself inwardly, and has thus seen his way, that life acquires peace and significance."[10] Even though Tennyson said that the "I" in the poem was "not always the author speaking of himself,

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[9] Journal, p. 65.

[10] Journal, p. 46.

but rather the voice of the human race through him,"[11] it should be mentioned that here, as in other poems, he was more than likely using the plural as a means of generalizing his situation. In this way, the speaker in the poem becomes representative of all thinking men who have been faced not only with the loss of a loved one, but also with spiritual barrenness, loss of faith, and doubt of religious belief.[12] By speaking sometimes in the plural, Tennyson is able to shift his point of view to a collective persona in which he can perhaps better express his profound agony and grief and loneliness. Tennyson does indeed imply a concern for all mankind when he writes in the Prologue:

> Thou wilt not leave us in the dust,
> Thou madest man, he knows not why,
> He thinks he was not made to die;
> And thou hast made him: thou art just.
> (9-12)

Certainly, the heavily ironic tones of the argument of God creating man to do nothing else but die are as intrinsic in these lines as is their humanitarianism.[13] But the poet himself--as the individual--still

> . . .remain'd, whose hopes were dim,
> Whose life, whose thoughts were little worth,
> To wander on a darken'd earth. . . .
> (LXXXV, 29-31)

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[11] Memoir, I, 305.

[12] Ryals, Theme and Symbol, p. 196.

[13] See the Introduction to this thesis.

Even earlier than these lines Tennyson wrote: "One writes, that 'other friends remain,'/That loss is common to the same--" (VI, 1-2); it should be noticed that this is considerably earlier. In the same stanza he wrote a further expression of despair: "And what to me remains of good?/ . . .And unto me no second friend." (VI, 42-44)

It seems that even from these few examples we see a deeper concern on Tennyson's part for himself--a deeper concern at this point in his life for himself than for mankind. This is not to be held against Tennyson, for in most of his poems to 1850 this idea is prevalent. And certainly, it is prevalent throughout In Memoriam. Earlier I pointed to Buckley's feeling that Tennyson is ultimately, according to Kierkegaard's definition, the "subjective thinker"; Tennyson is one who "seeks to understand the abstract determination of being human in terms of this particular existing human being."[14]

In Memoriam was not written as a unified and connected work; rather, it was written in fragments and later assembled by Tennyson to form the final whole in which his poetic imagination progressed through a "cosmic march upward."[15] It is, as a result of a careful assembling of the finished

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[14] Tennyson, p. 126.

[15] James Henziger, Images of Eternity: Studies in the Poetry of Religious Vision from Wordsworth to T. S. Eliot (Carbondale, Ill., 1962), p. 139.

work, easy to read the poem as a unified, synthesized chain of thought. I agree with T. S. Eliot who holds that In Memoriam is

> . . .a long poem made by putting together lyrics which have only the unity and continuity of a diary, the concentrated diary of a man confessing himself. It is a diary of which we have to read every word.[16]

This is, of course, to take a dangerous step and disagree with the poet himself who said that the poem must be regarded in the light of "a poem, not an actual biography." Tennyson continues:

> It is founded on our friendship, on the engagement of Arthur Hallam to my sister, on his sudden death at Vienna, on his burial at Clevedon Church. The poem concludes with the marriage of my youngest sister Cecilia. It was meant to be a kind of Divina Commedia ending with happiness.[17]

Possibly it does not really matter in which light one prefers to read the poem: as a connected diary or a progression to happiness; both elements seem to be present. There seems to be no reasonable explanation for a poet to write over a hundred sections then assemble them in a meaningless fashion. Even if he had intended to do this, his finished product would probably still resemble a logical progression. I am merely attempting to show how Tennyson achieved happiness by making a progression to faith and

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[16]"In Memoriam," Critical Essays on the Poetry of Tennyson, ed. John Killham (London, 1960), p. 212.

[17]Hallam, Lord Tennyson, ed. Enoch Arden and In Memoriam (London, 1909), pp.203-4.

spiritual reconciliation. The poem is not "an actual biography," it is more: it is the "way of a soul"--a soul which has known and lived in the dregs of despair, which has come to release itself from the cage of doubt, and which has achieved a subjective existence and indwelling existence.

At the very beginning one is confronted with Tennyson's famous lines of resignation to "faith and faith alone," (Prologue, 3) and his embracing of faith: "Believing where [he] cannot prove." (Prologue, 4) Even at this early stage in his journey, one sees his initial attempts to approach an expression of faith.[18] But these attempts are only initial hopes, so it turns out; he seems to be not at all positive in his statement of faith; he is, rather, firmly in the stage of non-resolution and must yet make his reconciliation. The poet seems to partake of death himself. Here Tennyson can be said to be deepest in despair; here he can be said to be at odds with the universe over the loss of the one person he loved more than anyone else: Arthur Hallam.

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[18]One must always, however, bear in mind that the Prologue was written at the very end of Tennyson's labors; thus, it was more than likely added to the finished work at a later date. This would make the Prologue not an introduction to a grasping for faith or a search for happiness but, rather, a conclusion to the search. The entire Prologue seems out of place in its present capacity. The piece seems to be more properly a tag-line to the otherwise logical progression of the entire poem.

Tennyson grew to maturity in a period of intense religious ferment, which was destined to continue with various degrees of intensity during the whole of his life.[19] As Kierkegaard experienced the hurt of doubt, so did Tennyson, even though the three main principles of Evangelicalism under which Tennyson was raised always seemed to hang over him: the conviction of original sin inherited from the fall of Adam and the consequent doom of mankind to eternal punishment from which salvation is promised to the elect through the atoning death of Christ. As Tennyson put it in one of his earliest mature poems:

> O God, my God, have mercy now.
> I faint, I fall. Men say that thou
> Didst die for me, for such as me,
> Patient of ill, and death, and scorn,
> And that my sin was as a thorn
> Among the thorns that girt Thy brow
> Wounding Thy soul. . . .[20]

But, as Sir Charles Tennyson says, "the poet finds it hard to believe in the efficacy of this promise."[21] The poet tried for several years to find some sign of hope to lighten his life and strengthen his faith. The tone of the following sonnet of 1832 seems to be similar to the

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[19] See Chapter I of this thesis.

[20] "Supposed Confessions of a Second-Rate Sensitive Mind," 1-7, The Poetic and Dramatic Works of Alfred, Lord Tennyson, 7 vols. (Cambridge, Mass., 1929), I, 12. Hereafter all line references to poems other than In Memoriam, The Princess, and Maud shall be from this edition unless otherwise noted.

[21] Six Tennyson Essays (London, 1954), p. 77.

idea of grasping which one sees in In Memoriam:

> Me my own Fate to lasting sorrow doometh;
> Thy woes are birds of passage, transitory:
> Thy spirit, circled with a living glory,
> In summer still a summer joy resumeth,
> Alone my hopeless melancholy gloometh,
> Like a lone cypress, thro' the twilight hoary,
> From an old garden where no flower bloometh,
> One cypress on an island promontory;
> But yet my lonely spirit follows thine,
> As round the rolling earth night follows day;
> But yet thy lights on my horizon shine
> Into my night, when thou art far away;
> I am so dark, alas! and thou so bright.
> When we two meet there's never perfect light.[22]

In these early poems we can see Tennyson's loss of the single faith he had learned at his "remarkable and saintly" mother's knee and the doubt which accompanied the loss.[23] Thus, the tone seems to have been set in Tennyson's early poems for the final grand sweep of In Memoriam.

Tennyson was subject to the social and domestic influence of his surroundings.[24] To a poet such as Tennyson, the poetic response to a rather unhappy environment can only be one of despair. Certainly, despair was foremost in his life at the time of writing In Memoriam. If one considers the poet, at this period in his life, to be in the ethical stage then one can also consider him to have realized his suffering. This would remove him from the aesthetic

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[22]"Lasting Sorrow", originally printed in Friendship's Offering, 1832 - quoted in Memoir, I, p. 65.

[23]Lyall, p. 23.

[24]See Chapter I of this thesis.

stage and from the context of an inauthentic existence. Kierkegaard points out in the Postscript that

> The ethical individual. . .has despaired; in this despair he has chosen himself; in and by this choice he reveals himself ('the expression which sharply differentiates between the ethical and the aesthetic is this: it is every man's duty to reveal himself'--the first part was concealment).[25]

Tennyson, in many of early poems, has "chosen himself" and has chosen to "reveal himself." This would make the job considerably easier, for one can then examine Tennyson as being in the ethical stage of non-resolution with In Memoriam.

Tennyson is aware of the sense of despair caused by the tension of the finite and infinite in man when he writes:

> Calm and deep peace in the wide air,
> These leaves that redden to the fall,
> And in my heart, if calm at all,
> If any calm, a calm despair.
> (XI, 13-16)

He realizes that life is a mere "mortal coil" in which he shuffles from day to day--now that he has lost the simple and "enduring" faith of his childhood. But his "calm despair" is not so calm as he would have us believe; only a few lines further he writes:

> Lo, as a dove when up she springs
> To bear thro' heaven a tale of woe,
> Some dolorous message knit below
> The wild pulsation of her wings;

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[25] Postscript, p. 277.

Like her I go, I cannot stay;
  I leave this mortal ark behind,
  A weight of nerves without a mind,
And leave the cliffs, and haste away

O'er ocean-mirrors rounded large,
  And search the glow of southern skies,
  And see the sails at distance rise,
And linger weeping on the marge,

And saying, "Comes he thus, my friend?
  Is this the end of all my care?"
  And circle moaning in the air,
"Is this the end? Is this the end?"
(XII, 1-16)

These stanzas seem to reflect what Kierkegaard called the "synthesized self," another example of the paradoxical state of existence: the tension and conflict of consciousness and unconsciousness within the self. Tennyson in these lines longs for immortality and compares his spirit to a dove flying off to explore the life beyond this earth. But as the symbolic dove approaches the "waters," it realizes that it cannot go any farther; it has met the intangible and impenetrable wall dividing life from death; despair, then, results for both Tennyson and the poetic dove.

Tennyson's thoughts concerning immortality--and the immortality of Hallam occupy a prominent position in his poetry and contribute to his despair. We know that Tennyson's faith was severely shaken by the death of Hallam and the materialistic and agnostic trends of his age. Tennyson began to doubt the validity of any kind of faith when Hallam died in the prime of a promising and productive life. And the materialism of the times denied the reality of the soul

and consequently its immortality. Also, the generally agnostic thinking of the mid-nineteenth century denied even a simple knowledge of the soul and of its immortality. It was, of course, this spirit of doubt, disbelief, and denial which Tennyson had to encounter and finally surpass in trying to believe firmly in the immortality of man--especially in his own and Hallam's immortality.[26] Through the brief use of the dove symbol discussed above, Tennyson establishes, it seems, a device by which he can poetically search out and find a faith based on immortality and God. Underlying Tennyson's whole feeling at the writing of In Memoriam seems to be the thought that if man's end is nothing but the grave then worthlessness is written on everything. Tennyson needed something considerably more than worthlessness.

Tennyson sustained himself in his philosophy by moments of vision, according to Henziger.[27] But in actuality, these "moments of vision" were comparatively few; and if there is any real optimism in the early sections of In Memoriam, then his "inner heat" in the "mystic frame" is sustained only by these occasional glimpses. In Section XCV, for example, Tennyson experiences a mystical vision

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[26]For a dated but excellent discussion of Tennyson's personal views on immortality of the soul, see E. H. Sneath, The Mind of Tennyson: His Thoughts on God, Freedom, and Immortality (New York, 1900), pp. 106-189, et passim.

[27]Images of Eternity, p. 142.

in which the dead Hallam touched him:

> So word by word, and line by line,
> The dead man touch'd me from the past,
> And all at once it seem'd at last
> The living soul was flash'd on mine.
> (33-36)

But, as Buckley says, "the vision of the dead Hallam is eventually 'stricken thro' with doubt' (XCV, 44); the appearances of the world in all its 'doubtful dusk' obscure the vision, and the poet returns to the awareness of simple physical sensation."[28] But by now he is able to return with a renewed composure and purpose and faith. According to Buckley, even though Tennyson is unable to sustain the vision, the "I" of the poem "finds in his mystical insight the surest warrant for spiritual recovery."[29] Tennyson reports times when he had consciousness only of his own individuality, and that he was acutely aware of losing that individuality--not into extinction but into true life. According to Henziger, this is the crux of the matter.[30] Tennyson was concerned with both the physical world of existence and an after-life in which perception would remain the same as in this life but with an increased amount of awareness. The poet's inability to know this immortality as a certainty, however, led him to doubt it, and later led him to question God, or even the possibility of God's

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[28] Tennyson, p. 123.

[29] Ibid., p. 123.

[30] Images of Eternity, p. 143.

existence. In In Memoriam Tennyson seems to feel that as man is immersed more deeply in the present, he forgets past moments of existence:

> . . .as he grows he gathers much,
> And learns the use of "I" and "me,"
> And finds "I am not what I see,
> And other than the things I touch.
>
> So rounds he to a separate mind
> From whence clear memory may begin;
> As thro' the frame that binds him in
> His isolation grows defined.
>
> This use may lie in blood and breath,
> Which else were fruitless of their due,
> Had man to learn himself anew
> Beyond the second birth of death.
> (XLIV, 7-16)

Only two stanzas later, as if to emphasize these statements, he writes:

> We ranging down this lower track,
> The path we came by, thorn and flower,
> Is shadowed by the growing hour,
> Lest life should fail in looking back.
> (XLVI, 1-4)

So, in essence, one sees Tennyson concerned in the earlier stanzas with life as he knows it to be--not any kind of future existence which he actually only supposes. But he still hopes there is truth in an eternal after-life, a hope which he held only as a wish until the later stanzas of the poem. The following statement, made by Tennyson in 1839, can be seen to point out these feelings; "Thro' darkness and storm and weariness of mind and of body is there built a passage for His created ones to the gates of

light."[31] Until the poet reached an affirmation of faith in In Memoriam, his thoughts were only thoughts, not truly subjective beliefs derived from subjective examination. The foundation was nevertheless built; Tennyson had at least chosen subjectivity. Kierkegaard believes that

> An objective reflection inquires into the truth of the God-idea and raises the question of God's existence; a subjective reflection inquires into the subjectivity, the mode of existence, of the individual, asking whether he is related to something in such a manner that his relationship is a true God-relationship.[32]

Tennyson had asked, and in In Memoriam he subjectively arrives at his answer in the form of faith.

In any consideration of In Memoriam as a progression from doubt to faith, it is imperative that Tennyson's use of the Christ image be discussed. In the poem, Tennyson employs a series of allusions and images which recall the

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[31] Memoir, I, 172.

[32] David F. Swenson, Something About Kierkegaard (Minneapolis, 1941), p. 85. I have chosen to use Swenson's paraphrase of Kierkegaard's statement. Kierkegaard has a tendency to become extremely vague at times--especially in the Postscript. The actual statement is as follows: "When we inquire about the truth objectively, our reflection is objectively directed to the truth as an object to which the knower stands related. Reflection is not focused upon the relationship, but upon the question whether it is the truth to which he stands related. When this something has been made out to be the truth, then the inquirer is supposed to be in the truth. But when we inquire subjectively into the truth, reflection is focused subjectively upon the subject's relationship. If the mode of this relationship is a valid one, then the individual is in the truth, even if that to which he stands related be untruth." Postscript, p. 178. The truth to which Kierkegaard refers is God. Obviously, by this type of logic, anything can be considered to be "truth."

figure of Christ; and these images are used throughout in connection with Arthur Hallam. Hallam is seen to be symbolic of Christ, a figure gradually leading the mourning poet to the realization of a life after death. Ryals points out that "the intersection between the temporal and the eternal is particularly noticeable in the subtly changing status of the dead Hallam in response to the psychological and philosophical needs of the speaker.[33] Although Ryals "hesitates" to use the term "Christ-figure," he does state that Hallam becomes for Tennyson "not only the departed friend who is mourned but also the saviour to whom the speaker looks for rescue from his doubt and despair."[34]

Early in the poem, Tennyson does not know which way to turn. When he writes:

> And saying, "Comes he thus, my friend?
> Is this the end of all my care?"
> And circle moaning in the air,
> "Is this the end? Is this the end?"
> (XII, 13-16)

he seems to recall the Biblical despair of Christ's followers after the Crucifixion. As a result of His death

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[33] Theme and Symbol, p. 205.

[34] Ibid., p. 206. Ryals qualifies his statement with the comment that the transformation comes about in a confused manner. And he points out that Tennyson "disliked discussion on the nature of Christ," (Memoir, I, 326). and that the poet did not like to meet his ideas head-on. "Instead," says Ryals, "he wished to keep his religious belief under the cover of accepted Christian forms and conduct. In other words, to breathe life into an old form." This, of course, flatly contradicts the feelings of Willey and Buckley.

on the cross they were in despair because they did not understand the teachings of a heavenly kingdom, and were dismayed when their visions of an earthly kingdom were destroyed by His death. Tennyson, likewise, is deeply burdened. The earthly form of Hallam is gone and he has no concept of Hallam's heavenly form to console him. In his quest for consolation, Tennyson recalls happier times when he and Hallam were still together:

> So find I every pleasant spot
> In which we two were wont to meet,
> The field, the chamber, and the street,
> For all is dark where thou art not.
> (VIII, 9-12)

The Book of Ephesians seems to offer a Biblical solution to the poet's problem: "Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." (Ephesians, 5:14) Tennyson is unable to "rise from the dead"--the lethargy of his unbelief. He cannot yet accept Christ's presence through Hallam because his friend is present only in memory, and whenever the memory fades then "all is dark."

These memories cause Tennyson to ponder the idea of another meeting with Hallam:

> And if along with thee should come
> The man I held as half-divine,
> Should strike a sudden hand in mine,
> And ask a thousand things of home.
> (XIV, 9-12)

Hallam is, it seems, becoming more firmly considered as a Christ type in Tennyson's mind, which is illustrated by his

being described as "half-divine." Hallam is also referred to as

> The human-hearted man I loved,
> A Spirit, not a breathing voice.
> (XIII, 11-12)

Although he tries to, Tennyson does not, of course, specifically equate Hallam with Christ. But he does hope that Hallam is <u>like</u> Christ. He hopes that Hallam in death has become a divine figure. In the poet's mind, the idea of a divine Hallam could be grounds for a belief in a divine and sympathetic Christ. But more importantly, it could be grounds for a more firm belief in immortality. The transition to a stronger belief begins to be apparent when Tennyson begins to consider the possibility of a positive side to his tragic experience:

> I hold it true, whate'er befall:
> I feel it, when I sorrow most:
> 'Tis better to have loved and lost
> Than never to have loved at all.
> (XXVII, 13-16)

This passage can, I feel, be compared to Christ's time on earth and his departure from earthly form. Tennyson, like Christ's followers, has gained much from the brief association with the departed and has cause to be thankful for the experience. He still cannot completely escape the feeling of irretrievable loss, but he has begun to be reconciled to the thought that possibly the good outweighs the bad, "whate'er befall," and he has a more positive foundation upon which to build his faith. But there still

remains much doubting, suffering, and questioning for the poet because he is continually beset by sorrow over the absence of Hallam's earthly form, and cannot yet gain complete comfort from consideration of the divine as the highest truth. In other words, he still seems to be in a state of isolation from his beloved friend. "For this reason," says Ryals, "Hallam's death created, or at least intensified, a need for complete spiritual regeneration."[35]

In "Supposed Confessions of a Second-Rate Sensitive Mind" Tennyson had appeared to be in deep despair over his inability to accept the conventional Christian idea of immortality. He came to feel that God is incompatible with suffering and that evil and sin are universal. These features of a living hell--in Tennyson's mind--the poet brings out through his character in his poem, "Despair," who says:

> Hell? If the souls of men were immortal,
> as men have been told,
> The lecher would cleave to his lusts,
> and the miser would yearn for his gold;
> And so there were Hell forever! But were
> there a God, as you say,
> His love would have power over Hell till
> it utterly vanish'd away.[36]

These lines seem to be echoed in In Memoriam:

> What then were God to such as I?
> 'T were hardly worth my while to choose

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[35] Theme and Symbol, p. 207.

[36] Quoted in Charles F. Masterman, Tennyson as a Religious Teacher (London, 1900), p. 203.

Of things all mortal, or to use
A little patience ere I die;

'T were best at once to sink in peace,
Like birds the charming serpent draws,
To drop head foremost in the jaws
Of vacant darkness and to cease.
(XXXIV, 9-16)

And again:

Man, her last work, who seem'd so fair,
Such splendid purpose in his eyes,
Who roll'd the psalm to wintry skies,
Who built him fanes of fruitless prayer,

Who trusted God was love indeed
And love creation's final law--
Tho' Nature, red in tooth and claw
With ravine, shriek'd against his creed--

Who loved, who suffer'd countless ills,
Who battled for the True, the Just,
Be blown about the desert dust,
Or seal'd within the iron hills?
(LVI, 9-20)

He concludes the stanza with a tragic sense of despair:

O life as futile, then, as frail!
O for thy voice to sooth and bless!
What hope of answer or redress?
Behind the veil, behind the veil.
(LVI, 25-28)

The main theme of In Memoriam is the possibility of a life--at least the continued existence of a human spirit--after death. As Charles Tennyson points out, this was the question under consideration in "The Two Voices" from another point of view: suicide.[37] The whole discussion in In Memoriam proceeds from Tennyson longing for conviction that his spirit is not to be permanently severed from

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[37] Six Essays, p. 83.

Hallam's and that they both will be immortal. The realization, or awareness, that it may be is a prime mover for despair and frustration.

So one sees Tennyson in the midst of despair--an "infant crying in the night." But through this despair there begins to be seen a glimmer of better things to come:

> The wish, that of the living whole
> No life may fail beyond the grave,
> Derives it not from what we have
> The likest God within the soul?
> (LV, 1-4)

By remaining separate from purely intellectual categories, Tennyson kept to the "reality of inwardness,"[38] and the truth of subjectivity. Kierkegaard said that salvation of the individual can be found "only in one thing, in becoming a single individual."[39] To become this type of person the prerequisite was the abandonment of objectivity and reason and turning inward to the self. Or, as Tennyson expresses it: "A warmth within the breast would melt/The freezing reason's colder part," (CXXIII, 13-14) The love of God, then, and the belief in an immortality of the human soul, is seen to be, according to both Kierkegaard and Tennyson, an act of faith rather than an act of reason. In this light, Tennyson's progression from doubt, despair,

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[38]Charles Glicksburg, The Self in Modern Literature (University Park, Pa., 1963), p. 5. Although this phrase was not applied to Tennyson directly, I have found it convenient in this paper.

[39]The Point of View, p. 61.

and suffering to a firm and subjective faith can be further examined.

CHAPTER IV: *IN MEMORIAM* AS A VEHICLE OF FAITH

THE DESIRE FOR FAITH

One of the problems of the poet is that of finding the exact word to express his feelings. He must learn that "last year's language/And next years' words await another voice."[1] As Kenneth Burke says, "the poet wrestles always with the semantic angel" if he wishes to gain variety of expression.[2] Fortunately, it seems to have been Tennyson's good fortune that he did not always have to wrestle with the word problem; he was, rather, plagued by the despair and doubt of a crumbled faith and by the paradox within himself. In 1837, during the silent period, he had written "Oh, that 't were Possible," a lyric which was to be one of the bases (along with the so-called "Shell" lyric) of the later Maud.[3] In this lyric,

> O that 't were possible
> After long grief and pain
> To find the arms of my true love
> Round me once again![4]

Tennyson shows another expression of his despair and grief as he had done in "The Two Voices." But further, he seems to express here an echo of the desire to loose himself from

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[1]T. S. Eliot, "Little Gidding," Four Quartets, II (New York, 1943), p. 35.

[2]"Mysticism as a Solution to the Poet's Dilemma," in Spiritual Problems in Contemporary Literature, ed. Stanley R. Hopper (New York, 1957), p. 96.

[3]Nicolson, p. 148.

[4]Maud, Pt. II, IV, I, 1-4.

that despair. In In Memoriam he expresses the same desire:

> But there is more than I can see,
> And what I see I leave unsaid,
> Nor speak it, knowing Death has made
> His darkness beautiful with thee.
> (LXXIV, 9-12)

It seems to be this engagement of Tennyson with his consciousness which makes In Memoriam the poem it is and which makes it assume its particular style.

Kierkegaard questions the possibility of a complete mystical union with anything beyond this life. Yet his faith requires "the moment of passion" comparable to the trance experience in Section XCV of In Memoriam. As Kierkegaard said, "it is only momentarily that the particular individual is able to realize existentially a unity of the finite and infinite which transcends existence."[5] At another point Kierkegaard said that self-awareness is born out of man's despair, since in the deepest despair the soul faces its fear of eventual annihilation, "struggles with death," but comes to know the agonizing life-in-death, the torment of "not to be able to die" as a prelude to acceptance of his obligation to himself in the form of faith.[6] Buckley points out that In Memoriam was probably "a memorial to Tennyson's own past and an earnest of the conviction that

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[5] Postscript, p. 176.

[6] The Sickness Unto Death, p. 149.

would sustain him in the years to come." [sic][7]

Elton Edward Smith feels that the passages which deal with the existence of God, His validity and purpose, the possibility of immortality, and the work of Christ "reveal that doubt is as strong as hope" in In Memoriam.[8] As I have established in the previous chapter, the elements of doubt and despair are omnipresent, but more so in the earlier sections of the poem rather than in the later sections. The element of doubt diminishes as the poet progresses in his "confession" and as he continues to work out his faith and hope as he nears the end. In other words, as faith increases, doubt decreases.[9] There is never, it is generally agreed, any certainty about matters of God, immortality, and associated things; rather, these are generally assigned to the realm of faith and hope. Kierkegaard held the belief that faith cannot be any sort of "provisional function."[10] That is to say, faith is always subject to the inward examination of the self; it cannot be objectively examined. As he says in the summary to the Postscript:

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[7]Tennyson, pp. 107-8. Emily Sellwood did, it should be mentioned, suggest the title, In Memoriam, to Tennyson, who had previously printed some of the lyrics under the title of "Fragments of an Elegy." He had planned to keep the same title for the finished publication.

[8]The Two Voices: A Tennyson Study (Lincoln, Nebr., 1964), p. 95.

[9]See Appendix B for additional notes on the organizational plan of the poem.

[10]Postscript, p. 540.

> He who from the vantage point of a higher knowledge would know his faith as a factor revealed in a higher idea has eo ipso ceased to believe. Faith must not rest content with unintelligibility; for precisely the relation to or the repulsion from the unintelligible, the absurd, is the expression for the passion of faith.[11]

If there is no absolute certainty about spiritual matters expressed in In Memoriam, one thing is certain: Tennyson desires immortality and salvation. But, as a man in the universe, he is confronted with the innate and self-evident paradox of identifying himself with infinity. Kierkegaard believed that this paradox was tolerable if man could accept it as being beyond his reasoning capabilities, but within reach of his faith. Tennyson once told William Allingham that "his chief belief rested on two things: 'a Chief Intelligence and Immortality.'"[12] For Tennyson immortality was far more important, but he still needed a God to validate the conviction that death would not end his existence.[13] From the point of this essential belief of the poet and the resultant search for validity and authenticity of his wishes and desires, Tennyson progressed further from doubt to faith. Tennyson's faith was not firm and concrete, as a cursory examination of the poem will show; an early critic's view of the poet's faith is

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[11] Ibid., p. 540.

[12] Memoir, II, p. 35.

[13] Fairchild, Religious Trends, IV, 114.

probably one of the best even now:

> All his discussion and speculation concerning the nature of God, Self, or Immortality (in In Memoriam) ultimately terminated in this position:--There are indications pointing to the existence of an all-perfect God, to the reality of the Self, to the Immortality of each individual personality. And then again there are facts of experience which seem directly to deny these possibilities. The only possibility is faith that these represent realities and not illusions; all other theories leave life meaningless, and effort vain. We must cling to the hope that some day we shall be answered and vindicated in our belief.--
>
> ... ...
>
> Personal devotion to Christ, personal experience of sin, direct consciousness of the presence of God, these do not in any way furnish the motifs of his poems. On the other hand, he did not maintain any unwavering attitude of triumph and optimistic conviction, which would have enabled him to teach a new creed, or proclaim a new religion. He was too uncertain himself; his faith often grew dim; he was striving, for the most part, in the dark, with only at intervals uncertain gleams of light. He strenuously proclaimed, indeed, one principle, and never forsook it all through his long life; but often the horizon appeared to him to be darkening, and his religion rather the last refuge of despair, than the joyful assertion of firm belief. Right on until the end, sadness and hope, doubt and faith, alternately reveal themselves in his writings.[14]

Or, as Tennyson himself says in the Prologue:

> We have but faith; we cannot know.
> For knowledge is of things we see;
> And yet we trust it comes from thee,
> A beam in darkness. . .
> (21-24)

And later he "falters" where he "firmly trod[s]": he falls

> Upon the great world's altar stairs
> That slope thro' the darkness up to God.
> (LV, 15-16)

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[14]Masterman, pp. 46, 237-8.

He consequently stretches his "lame hands of faith" (LV, 17) and says that he "faintly trust [s] " the "larger hope." (LV, 20)

Buckley says that Arthur Hallam is the one recurrent object in In Memoriam--"the single entity to which diverse moods directly or indirectly relate."[15] He says that it is, however, "the composing poet himself: who is the real "subject," and that it is "the quality of his changing sensibility. . .which constitutes the central interest of the poem."[16] Buckley also points out that Hallam is a life-symbol. Late in In Memoriam, Tennyson says that this life is indestructible; but early in the poem this life was seen to be rudely taken from human existence.[17] As Tennyson says in retrospect:

> But I remain'd, whose hopes were dim,
> Whose life, whose thoughts were little worth,
> To wander on a darken'd earth,
> Where all things round me breathed of him.
> (LXXXV, 29-32)

This seems to resemble Kierkegaard's idea of the subjective self and the partial progression to faith when a man in despair regards himself as a victim of external circumstances. Kierkegaard believes that man, if his self-chosen destiny and desire is a one-to-one relationship with God,

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[15] Tennyson, p. 110.

[16] Ibid., p. 110.

[17] Ibid., p. 110.

attempts, or at least has the spiritual capability to attempt, to reach beyond the ethical stage into the religious stage. It can be said that In Memoriam shows Tennyson still maintaining a propensity of despair and doubt in the earlier sections, reaching out for "dead hands" to comfort him, and that Hallam is the one to whom these hands belong:

> His credit thus shall set me free;
> And, influence-rich to soothe and save,
> Unused example from the grave
> Reach out dead hands to comfort me.
> (LXXX, 13-16)[18]

Earlier he had said:

> O life as futile, then, as frail!
> O for thy voice to soothe and bless!
> What hope of answer or redress
> Behind the veil, behind the veil.
> (LVI, 25-28)

We see, then, a movement of Tennyson's mind towards Hallam in a relatively short time. At the earlier point, the dead Hallam was unreachable by any means. But in section LXXX Tennyson is beginning to realize the means by which he can "reach" Hallam. The "movement" should be more closely examined.

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[18] Willey, More Nineteenth Century Studies, p. 63, feels that, in a sense, Hallam "completed" Tennyson by possessing some of the virtues which Tennyson himself lacked.

THE EXPRESSION OF FAITH

In Tennyson's mind, Hallam is passing from consideration as an individual mortal man with human feelings to a super-human ideal. Hallam is thus losing his personal identity and is becoming still closer to Christ-like perfection. Ryals asks that if Hallam now exists only as a memory, what then was the purpose of his life?[19] And what of immortality? Ryals answers by saying that "What actually convinces Tennyson of personal survival after death is his own need to believe it; but he explains his conviction as the result of his belief in the reality of self and the reality of love."[20] And finally, since the poet is unable to think of himself as non-existent, so he is not able to think of the self as becoming non-existent: "My own dim life should teach me this,/ That life shall live for evermore." (XXXIV, 1-2)[21] So even though Hallam is gone from his physical form and can no longer be associated with earthly love, he still retains Tennyson's love and is loved equally after death as before. In Tennyson's mind, then, love is the catalyst of immortality from God:

> The wish, that of the living whole
> No life may fail beyond the grave,

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[19] Theme and Symbol, p. 221.

[20] Ibid., p. 222.

[21] Quoted in Ryals, p. 222.

Derives it not from what we have
The likest God within the soul?
(LV, 1-4)

When Tennyson writes:

If, in thy second state sublime,
Thy ransom'd reason change replies
With all the circle of the wise,
The perfect flower of human time,
(LXI, 1-4)

it is apparent that he is more and more rejecting his despair.

In the short space between sections LVI and LXXX Tennyson could be said to be in the ethical stage of the Christian existential dialectic. For example, he says at one point:

My centred passion cannot move,
Nor will it lessen from day to day.
(LIX, 9-10)

He is not absolutely certain if he can reach Hallam after death, but he now has hope and belief based on his love for Hallam and his own subjectivity. In a fashion similar to that of a person praying to divinity, Tennyson writes:

So mayst thou watch me where I weep,
As, unto vaster motions bound,
The circuits of thine orbit round
A higher height, a deeper deep.
(LXIII, 9-12)

Kierkegaard believed that the self is a conscious coalescence of finity and infinitude, and that the precipitant, or synthesis, of the struggle is an establishment of a positive relationship to God--but only if the struggle is trusted to faith alone and not to reason. Tennyson subjectively examines himself so that he may avoid despair; he

says in section LXXXV:

> And so my passion hath not swerved
> To works of weakness, but I find
> An image comforting the mind,
> And in my grief a strength reserved.
>
> Likewise the imaginative woe,
> That loved to handle spiritual strife,
> Diffused the shock thro' all my life,
> But in the present broke the blow.
> (49-56)

If faith is not achieved, then, despair will be the usual precipitant of the conflict and tension in the human struggle. As Kierkegaard stated it:

> Every human existence which is not conscious of itself as spirit, or conscious of itself before God as spirit, every human existence which is not thus grounded transparently in God but obscurely reposes or terminates in some abstract universality (state, nation, etc.), or in obscurity about itself takes its faculties merely as active powers, without in a deeper sense being conscious whence it has them, which regards itself as an inexplicable something which is to be understood from without--every such existence, whatever it accomplishes, though it be the most amazing exploit, whatever it explains, though it were the whole of existence, however intensely it enjoys life aesthetically--every such existence is after all despair.[22]

Early in the poem Tennyson does not fully understand what God is[23] or what man is:

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[22] The Sickness Unto Death, p. 71.

[23] Although he did have a tendency to believe that God does nothing in vain--Deus nihil agit frustra--the premature death of Hallam obviously raised a definite question in Tennyson's mind about the problem of "divine wastefulness." For example, even in the "Prologue," which is more of a summary of the entire poem than it is an introduction, he wrote: "Thou madest death; and lo, thy foot/ Is on the skull which thou hast made." (7-8)

What then were God to such as I?
'T were hardly worth my while to choose
Of things all mortal, or to use
A little patience ere I die.
(XXXIV, 9-12)

He says in one of his more famous short poems that if he understood "the Flower in the cranied wall" he would understand "What God is and what man is."[24] Henziger points out that the only unit of cosmic life which Tennyson could understand was not a "flower" but himself.[25] But Tennyson had the desire and the wish to establish a relationship with God. I would extend Henziger's comparison and submit that Tennyson could not understand himself fully until he had thoroughly examined his soul through In Memoriam.[26] His "heat of inner evidence" lay only as a cold spark as it does in all men, but, by placing his faith above reason, subjectivity above objectivity, he could attempt the identification with God and thus with himself; he says of the newly-born baby:

But as he grows he gathers much,
And learns the use of "I" and "me,"
And finds "I am not what I see,
And other than the things I touch."

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[24]This is not to imply that Tennyson had similar spiritual problems in his old age. See Chapter II of this thesis.

[25]Images of Eternity, p. 143.

[26]This may be one reason why there was distinct change in the tone, temper, and purpose of Tennyson's poetry and philosophy after 1850. Perhaps the line in which he refers to his "civic crown" in In Memoriam, gives us a foreshadowing of this change.

So rounds he to a separate mind
  From whence clear memory may begin,
  As thro' the frame that binds him in
His isolation grows defined.

This use may lie in blood and breath,
  Which else were fruitless of their due,
  Had man to learn himself anew
Beyond the second birth of death.
(XLV, 5-16)

If we look below the literal meaning of these lines and examine them from the viewpoint of a mature and thinking man as trying to reach a point of identity with himself, with God, and with certain higher truths, then they begin to take on new significance. "I am not what I see,/And other than the things I touch"--this seems to imply that Tennyson is still furthering his attempt at a positive God-self relationship. According to Kierkegaard, God is not something external; quite the contrary: God is internal and He can be reached only after much despair and a realization of the "sin" of standing before Him and not recognizing Him. As a result, the birth of a new self, "beyond the second birth of death," as Tennyson would have it, stands directly before God within the self. Kierkegaard expresses a similar idea when he says:

> The more conception of God, the more self; the more self, the more conception of God. Only when the self as this definite individual is conscious of existing before God, only then is it the infinite self.[27]

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[27] The Sickness Unto Death, p. 44.

Tennyson once made a similar statement:

> God is love, transcendent, all-pervading! We do not get this faith from the nature of the world. If we look at nature alone, full of perfection and imperfection, she tells us that God is disease, murder, and rapine. We get this faith from ourselves, from what is highest within us.[28]

He restated himself in In Memoriam when he wrote:

> I found him not in world or sun,
> Or eagle's wing, or insect's eye,
> Nor thro' the questions men may try,
> The petty cobwebs we have spun.
>
> If e're when faith had fallen asleep,
> I heard a voice, "Believe no more,"
> And heard an ever-breaking shore
> That tumbled in the Godless deep,
>
> A warmth within the breast would melt
> The freezing reason's colder part,
> And like a man in wrath the heart
> Stood up and answer'd, "I have felt."
>
> No, like a child in doubt and fear:
> But that blind clamor made me wise;
> Then was I as a child that cries,
> But, crying, knows his father near;
>
> And what I am beheld again
> What is, and no man understands;
> And out of darkness came the hands
> That reach thro' nature, moulding men.
> (CXXIV, 5-24)

Tennyson had often compared himself to Hallam and, at times, wished that he could be more like Hallam. With Hallam dead, Tennyson, after his period of despair, has his opportunity. He wishes for immortality, for Hallam's continued existence, and for faith. Buckley says that once Tennyson abandons the use of reason and replaces it with

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[28] Memoir, I, 314.

faith the "moment of full apprehension" comes: the revelation that reveals the "continuous life for which his whole heart hungers."[29] Tennyson had previously wished for a physical appearance of Hallam, but he soon realized the folly of his wish and turned to a desire for communication between their spirits. In the lines above, Tennyson seems to have been successful. Smith believes that even though the poet rejected common spiritualism, "as Christ returned in the form of the Holy Ghost, so may the poet's ghost feel the presence of Arthur's."[30]

By contemplating the method of achieving the union with Hallam, Tennyson arrives at what he apparently considers to be the key to salvation:

> In vain shalt thou, or any, call
> The spirits from their golden day,
> Except, like them, thou too canst say,
> My spirit is at peace with all.
> (XCIV, 5-8)

Tennyson seems to realize that he must purify his own spirit before he can approach the divine spirit of Hallam. Thus his desire to reach his friend has provided him with a realization of the opportunity for his own salvation through faith. As he reads Hallam's letters, the words, like the words of Christ, live on for Tennyson, comforting him and leading him to the assurance of his salvation. As Buckley

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[29] Tennyson, p. 122.

[30] The Two Voices, p. 91.

says, "the past suddenly asserts its persistence and its infinite extension:"[31]

> And strangely on the silence broke
> The silent-speaking words, and strange
> Was love's dumb cry defying change
> To test his worth; and strangely spoke
>
> The faith, the vigour, bold to dwell
> On doubts that drive the coward back,
> And keen thro' wordy snares to track
> Suggestion to her inmost cell.
>
> So word by word, and line by line,
> The dead man touch'd me from the past,
> And all at once it seem'd at last
> His living soul was flash'd on mine.
> (XCV, 25-36)

Tennyson has now arrived at a positive belief and faith in God through his belief in the immortality of Hallam. He rejects his former unbelief and despair:

> Ring in the valiant man and free
> The larger heart, the kindlier hand;
> Ring out the darkness of the land,
> Ring in the Christ that is to be.
> (CVI, 29-32)

He feels secure in the belief that Hallam, like Christ, is looking down on him from above:

> While thou, dear spirit, happy star,
> O'erlook'st the tumult from afar,
> And smilest, knowing all is well.
> (CXXVII, 18-20)

The remainder of the poem is a joyous voicing of the poet's firmly established faith. His struggle to avoid losing his friend for eternity has brought about his own salvation and faith:

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[31] Tennyson, p. 122.

Far off thou art, but ever nigh;
I have thee still, and I rejoice;
I prosper, circled with my voice,
I shall not lose thee tho' I die.
(CXXX, 13-16)

Tennyson now fully realizes the importance of a dependence upon Christ as a Saviour:

Rise in the spiritual rock,
Flow thro' our deeds and make them pure.
(CXXXI, 3-4)

By the end of the poem, the mood is one of happiness in his newly-found faith and belief in an immortal life: "Today the grave is bright for me." (Epilogue, 73) The final lines reflect both Tennyson's belief that Hallam lives in Christ, or God, and his final affirmation of faith:

Whereof the man that with me trod
This planet was a noble type
Appearing ere the times were ripe,
That friend of mine who lives in God,

That God, which ever lives and loves,
One God, one law, one element,
And one far-off divine event,
To which the whole creation moves.
(Epilogue, 140-144)

Ryals believes that even though Tennyson seems to be more concerned with a renewal of friendship than with the desire for an everlasting life, he still "works very hard at making the quest the search for the Incarnate God; he does this. . .by making Hallam a Christ-figure."[32]

Kierkegaard felt that only a God and a divine plan which surpass human reason to the point of seeming

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[32]Theme and Symbol, p. 255.

contradictory to it are adequate for the salvation of man. In other words, a God who conformed to human reason and objectivity would be a God subject to human proscriptions and limitations.[33] In the light of Tennyson's attempt to find an Incarnate God through the Christ-figure of Hallam, it can be seen that he was looking for a God who conformed to human proscriptions. But when Tennyson realizes that a physical appearance is impossible, he then relies upon his belief and his faith. It is a matter of feeling rather than of reasoning. So near the end of the poem he says:

> I'll rather take what fruit may be
> Of sorrow under human skies:
> 'T is held that sorrow makes us wise,
> Whatever wisdom sleep with thee.
> (CVIII, 13-16)

And again when he says:

> Let him, the wiser man who springs
> Hereafter, up from childhood shape
> His action like the greater ape,
> But I was <u>born</u> to other things.
> (CXX, 9-12)

Naturally, a person will not achieve salvation, identity with God, or immortality simply by deciding on rational grounds that only the irrational can satisfy his desires. The person who makes the leap of faith must, at the same time, abandon reason and fervently believe that he is unworthy of the saving grace.

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[33]Barnes, <u>The Literature of Possibility</u>, p. 155.

Kierkegaard, at times, suggests the absurdity of the possession of faith because of the finalty of death. But he overcomes the feeling and manages to maintain that faith is still the supreme virtue in the world.[34] After all, there exists but one alternative: the unalterable division between life and death. By positing a belief in a God who will alleviate the sufferings and mental turmoil caused by that division, the despair will likewise be alleviated. In this fashion one can see Tennyson climbing "the hill from end to end." (XCIX, 1)

Tennyson, by finally regarding Hallam as divinity, puts his belief in a God who will alleviate the despair of a life "as futile, then, as frail!" (LV, 25) Also, through the device of poetic analogy, Tennyson visualizes Hallam's apotheosis into divinity and hopes that God will send his "voice to soothe and bless!" from "behind the veil." (LVI, 26-28) Later, much later, he says that he will dwell in His spirit. Tennyson thus seems to reflect another of the major ideas of Christian existentialism: the arousal of the human consciousness to the basic realities of life. He has brought himself to a personal realization of a wall between being and nothingness. But this awareness is of a wall not so frightful as it had been in the earlier sections of the poem, because he has worked out the despair

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[34]Especially in The Concluding Unscientific Postscript, The Sickness Unto Death, and The Concept of Dread.

through the poem. By making the affirmation of faith in God and self, he seems to reflect the second major promise: an acceptance of his state of paradoxical and unsure existence and a realization that this paradox was beyond his reason to begin with. When Tennyson writes:

> A warmth within the breast would melt
> The freezing reason's colder part,
> And like a man in wrath the heart
> Stood up and answer'd, "I have felt,"
> (CXXIV, 13-16)

he can be said to be fortified by personal examination and subjectivity. At this point Tennyson gives his sorrow positive resolution.[35] By employing once again the analogy of the child and the child's progression from innocence to maturity, Tennyson reveals that his soul has traversed the same path. He has searched his soul, so to speak, and his discovery is simply that some things are beyond human reason. So, rather than press an empty objective search, the poet allows himself to undergo a sort of Carlylean "firebath" and stands up and answers, "I have felt." (CXXIV, 16) Through the "blind clamor" (CXXIV, 18) that he now thinks the previous sections of the poem have been, he has accomplished a state of reconciliation with his soul. In other words, he has clamored loudly and sadly and long, but the

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[35] Buckley, Tennyson, p. 126. I have substituted the phrase "personal examination and subjectivity" for what Buckley calls "intuition." "Intuition" seems to be a rather vague term when it is applied to the kind of introspection which Tennyson experienced.

clamor and despair have served the purpose of reaching salvation and faith.

As a result of experiencing what Kierkegaard called the state of "passion-filled awareness," Tennyson is able to reconcile existence with non-existence. He now realizes that the "warmth within the breast" (CXXIV, 13) will allow the hands to reach out of the darkness to him, and that "no man understands." (CXXIV, 22) Although he is fully aware that the hands cannot physically reach out to him, they enable him to at least have an article of faith. They are a means to an end; they enable him to place his faith in the area whence they come. Tennyson is able to have, in himself, a repository of trust. As he says in the poem:

> O living will that shalt endure
> When all that seems shall suffer shock,
> Rise in the spiritual rock,
> Flow through our deeds and make them pure.
> (CXXXI, 1-4)

And he now realizes that there are some things that cannot be proved, and that they must be accepted only by faith and trust:

> That we may lift from out of dust
> A voice as unto him that hears,
> A cry above the conquer'd years
> To one that with us works, and trust.
>
> With the faith that comes of self-control,
> The truths that never can be proved
> Until we close with all we loved,
> And all we flow from, soul in soul.
> (CXXXI, 5-12)

He places his faith in God and elects to serve as a "tool" in order that he may have some token of acceptance from

beyond this life; he places his faith in the belief that Hallam will reach for him from wherever he is. Eventually the two will "close" together.

Tennyson realizes that there are certain higher truths which "never can be proved," (CXXXI, 10) and has, after a period of a profound and direct confrontation with the possibility that life may indeed be meaningless for him without Hallam or without love, decided to make his love a "vaster passion." (CXXX, 10)--both for Hallam and for God. His assertion in Section CXXIV that he has "felt" is the ultimate affirmation of faith and subjectivity--the complete rejection of reason. Like Kierkegaard's "I believe," his poetic statement shows that the existence of God cannot be affirmed by any objective or rational means because "God is a subject" and can be found only by subjectivity. God can be found only by searching inward. Tennyson has placed his faith in a higher good that cannot be realized by reasoning. He has resolved the paradox of existence in his own case and has alleviated his despair. He has accepted both as being tolerable as long as he has something to look forward to at the end of this life. Tennyson has learned, through "wild and wandering cries," to transcend an isolating self-consciousness, to achieve the saner perspective of dispassion, and of faith, "ultimately to accept the tragic

realities of an objective world."[36] After a tormented journey of doubt and suffering, he hears "a hundred spirits whisper 'Peace'" and Tennyson now has reassurance that he will have a life beyond death. At the end of his journey, he puts his faith finally and firmly in "That God, which ever lives and loves." (Epilogue, 141) He has made the leap of faith.

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[36] Jerome Hamilton Buckley, The Victorian Temper: A Study in Literary Culture (Cambridge, Mass., 1951; reprinted New York, 1964), pp. 87-88.

CONCLUSION

In sum, Alfred Tennyson's In Memoriam can be seen to express several ideas--each of which have pertinent and corresponding ideas in the existential philosophy of Søren Kierkegaard. There are expressions of doubt, despair, hope, faith, and other similar concepts.

This paper has attempted to show how, through the writing of In Memoriam, Tennyson came to alleviate his grief and despair and achieve a spiritual tranquility. This paper has attempted to demonstrate how Tennyson, through the process of inward examination--subjectivity--and passionate searching, experienced a "leap of faith;" this faith ultimately led Tennyson, in the poem, to tranquility.

In his early creative life, Tennyson saw himself as having little meaning or significance. It might be said that, in his own eyes, he lacked a transcendent pattern and, as a result, imposed upon his life a pattern of existence which was meaningful to him. Further, it might be said that to appreciate this pattern, Tennyson had to establish some sort of "communication" with God, the dead Hallam, and even with himself. The poem can be seen, I feel, as the poet's cathartic experience, and that this experience, because it leads him to a firm belief in immortality, God, and himself, eventually leads him to a meaningful existence.

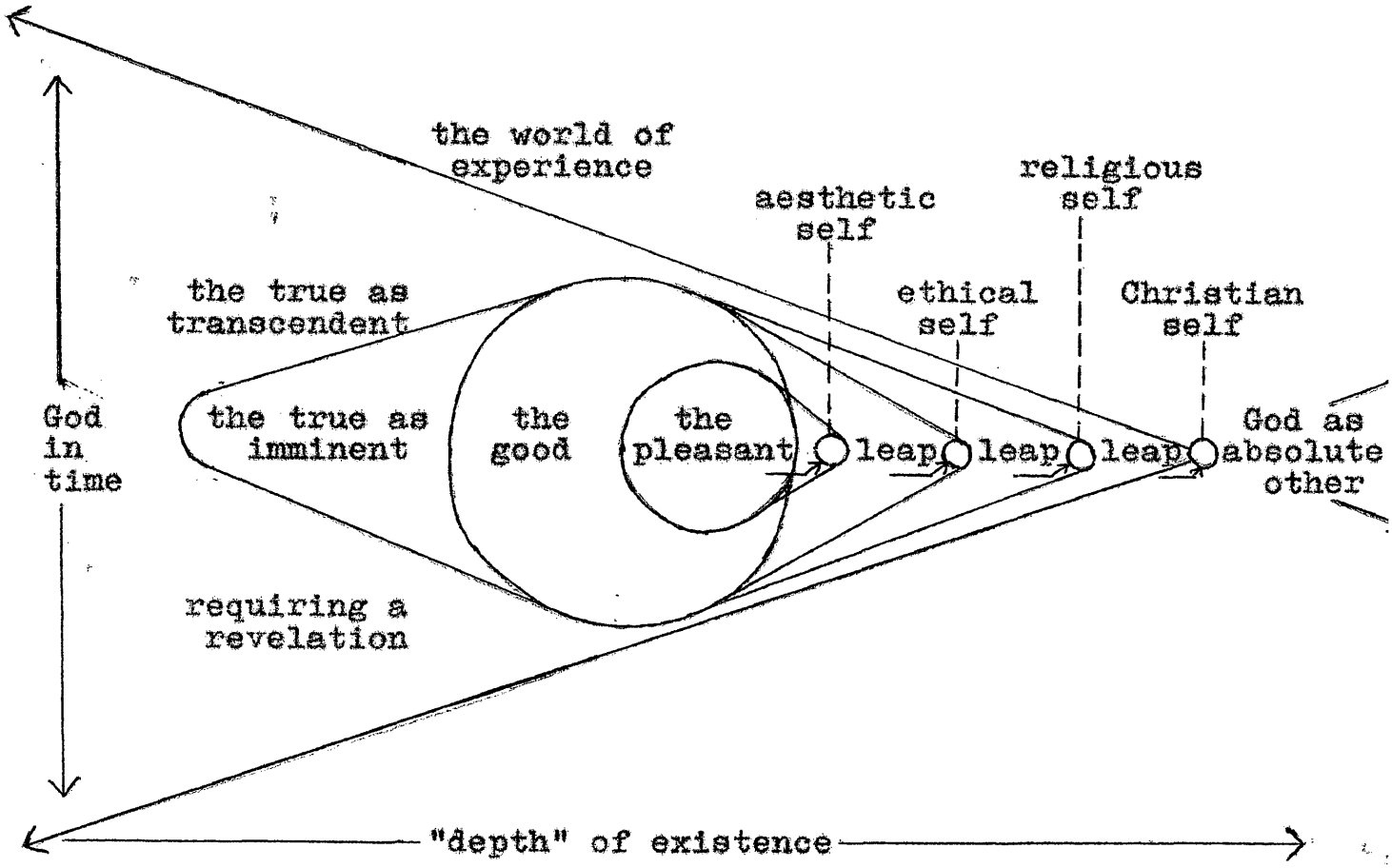
In Memoriam is representative of a distinct period of literary history. The social and personal implications may or may not be left to the historians, but the literature

itself, with its theological concerns, must remain for the literary scholar. Actually, one finds in studying the Victorian Age, that the two cannot be separated. Literature generally reflects the age in which it is written. And it generally represents the mind of its creator who is affected by the surrounding social, religious, and intellectual climate. The poetic product will inevitably reflect the climate and the poet. Of such a climate in the Victorian Period, In Memoriam is the most notable and distinguishing monument.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

A SCHEMA OF THE KIERKEGAARDIAN STAGES[1]



[1]Libuse Lukas Miller, In Search of the Self: The Individual in the Thought of Kierkegaard (Philadelphia, 1962), p. i.

APPENDIX B

SOME NOTES ON THE UNITY OF IN MEMORIAM

Jerome Hamilton Buckley has labelled two types of unity in In Memoriam: "stylistic" and "architectonic."[1] Stylistic unity is dependent upon recurring imagery and upon the repetition of certain key words and phrases throughout the work. Architectonic unity implies a dependence upon structural form imposed upon the work, such as the acts and scenes of a drama. In In Memoriam, Buckley finds only the stylistic unity and dismisses the structure of the poem as non-existent and "virtually formless."[2] The stylistic unity cannot be denied; there are many repetitions throughout the poem. The Christmas lyrics, for example, are related in expression as well as in content:

> The time draws near the birth of Christ.
> The moon is hid, the night is still;
> The Christmas bells from hill to hill
> Answer each other in the mist.
> (XXVIII, 1-4)

> The time draws near the birth of Christ;
> The moon is hid the night is still;
> A single church below the hill
> Is pealing, folded in the mist.
> (CIV, 1-4)

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[1] Tennyson, p. 112.

[2] Ibid., p. 112.

With trembling fingers did we weave
  The holly round the Christmas hearth;
  A rainy cloud possessed the earth,
And sadly fell our Christmas-eve.
(XXX, 1-4)

Again at Christmas did we weave
  The holly round the Christmas hearth;
  The silent snow possessed the earth,
And calmly fell our Christmas eve.
(LXXVIII, 1-4)

To-night ungather'd let us leave
  This laurel, let this holly stand:
  We live within the stranger's land
And strangely falls our Christmas-eve.
(CV, 1-4)

The first two stanzas above contain the figure anaphora and the recurrent images of moon, hill, and bells; the last three stanzas contain the recurrent images of laurel and holly. Similar techniques are found throughout the poem, important examples being the recurrent images of the house in lyrics VII and CIX, and the yew tree in II and XXXIX, and the human hand in various scattered lyrics. The anniversary poems share a common first line, and these passages, as well as many others in the poem, are seemingly designed to help give the illusion of unity. Although several lyrics may be interjected before a given image is repeated, it is usually given only a slight variation so that it should still sound familiar to the reader.

The question remains, however, whether or not the structure of the poem is "virtually formless." Despite Buckley's insistence, the majority of critics have described the poem in terms of its architectonic unity. The "authorized

version" of the poet's own description of the poem is found, of course, in the Memoir; the comment in the Memoir, on which A. C. Bradley bases his analysis of the poem, is brief and pointed: "After the death of A. H. H., the divisions of the poem are made by first Christmas Eve (XXVIII), Second Christmas (LXXVIII), Third Christmas Eve (CIV, CV, etc.)" Following this arrangement, the poem would fall into four parts; the first covering a time of about three months, the second and third a year apiece, and the fourth four months.

E. D. H. Johnson, following Bradley's quadripartite arrangement, charts the stages in the poem in two ways: spiritual growth and aesthetic growth. The stages of spiritual growth, according to Johnson are:

Part I: Despair (ungoverned sense)
Part II: Doubt (mind governing sense, i.e., despair)
Part III: Hope (spirit governing mind, i.e., doubt)
Part IV: Faith (spirit harmonizing sense and mind)[3]

This breakdown of the poem presents two problems. The first, and less important, is the vagueness of Johnson's terminology: he seems to equate despair with the definition of doubt, and doubt with the definition of hope. If he means this, then there is no valid distinction between the first three sections apart from the psychological movement he describes but does not explain.

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[3] "In Memoriam: The Way of a Poet", Victorian Studies, II, (1958-59), 148.

The second objection is that the spiritual progress of the poet does not describe a straight line of development. As this thesis points out, Tennyson reconciles his doubts and gradually comes to lose them, but he also experiences recurring doubts as he makes his progress to faith. The path of Tennyson's poetic soul does not, indeed, follow a straight line from A to Z. Valerie Pitt's analysis of the poem is agreeable to this irregular progression; she finds in the poem:

> . . .a pattern of three years, two years of grief and an uncompleted third, and the movement of experience and reflection is knit into this pattern. For these three years are not literal biographical years but phases in the experience of bereavement. There is a year of almost unrelieved gloom and desolation, there is a year in which the poet seems to be struggling out of darkness. . .and there is, finally, a year in which, once and for all, he lays hold of the promise which experience has opened to him. This threefold division of the poem does not of course destroy the possibility of subordinate movements within its main phases.[4]

There is again a reliance upon time divisions, but they seem, in Miss Pitt's examination, to be functional; in her analysis, also, the anniversaries mark changes in the mood of the poet, thus keeping a semblance of psychological and spiritual unity involved.

One recent critic of In Memoriam, J. C. C. Mays, has suggested a unifying device in the organization of the visions of the poet; he assigns the divisions of the poem

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[4]Tennyson Laureate (London, 1962), p. 88.

to the areas after lyrics XXVII, LXXI, XCVIII, and CIII.[5] Mays argues that in lyrics LXXI and XCVIII the poet passes through three successive stages of doubt and disillusionment, each terminating in a vision. The first two visions are incomplete (LXVII-LXXI and XCV), and the poet's doubts are renewed on the anniversaries of Hallam's death; but at the same time, Tennyson's hope is strengthened slightly by each vision which prepares him for the final attainment of his faith in the last (CIII).

The notion of the use of the vision device in In Memoriam as a means of using spiritual peace and faith is given credence by the fact that most critics (with the exception of Valerie Pitt) agree that Tennyson's final positive statement of faith begins with CIV, immediately after the dream vision in CIII in which the poet embraces his friend. Several of the individual lyrics explore the relationship of sleep and death (e.g., IV, XLIII, LXVIII, LXXI), stating that if they "be truly one," nothing would be lost to man--that is, one could be united in sleep with the spirits of the dead. There is also an emphasis on touch throughout the poem. In the second vision, the dead Hallam does touch Tennyson, and in the final vision, he embraces him. The emphasis upon the vision-sequences seems justifiable.

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[5] "In Memoriam: An Aspect of Form", University of Toronto Quarterly, XXXV (1965), 22-6.

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